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THOMAS CARLYLE

BY H. C. MACPHERSON

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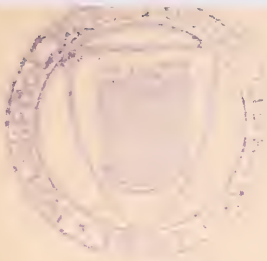

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THOMAS·
CARLYLE

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THOMAS CARLYLE

BY

HECTOR : C MACPHERSON

FAMOUS SCOTS: SERIES

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PREFACE

Of the writing of books on Carlyle there is no end. Why, then, it may pertinently be asked, add another stone to the Carlylean cairn? The reply is obvious. In a series dealing with famous Scotsmen, Carlyle has a rightful claim to a niche in the temple of Fame. While prominence has been given in the book to the Scottish side of Carlyle's life, the fact has not been lost sight of that Carlyle owed much to Germany; indeed, if we could imagine the spirit of a German philosopher inhabiting the body of a Covenanter of dyspeptic and sceptical tendencies, a good idea would be had of Thomas Carlyle. Needless to say, I have been largely indebted to the biography by Mr Froude, and to Carlyle's *Reminiscences*. Into the controversy over Mr Froude's editorial conduct I have not entered. In the body of this work will be found a hitherto unpublished letter received by me some years ago, in which Mr Froude gives a vigorous presentment of his side of the controversy. After all has been said, the fact remains that Froude's portrait,

though truthful in the main, is somewhat deficient in light and shade—qualities which the student will find admirably supplied in Professor Masson's charming little book, "Carlyle Personally, and in his Writings." To the Professor I am under deep obligation for the interest he has shown in the book. In the course of his perusal of the proofs, Professor Masson made valuable corrections and suggestions, which deserve more than a formal acknowledgment. To Mr Haldane, M.P., my thanks are also due for his suggestive criticism of the chapter on German thought, upon which he is an acknowledged authority.

I have also to express my deep obligations to Mr John Morley, who, in the midst of pressing engagements, kindly found time to read the proof sheets. In a private note Mr Morley has been good enough to express his general sympathy and concurrence with my estimate of Carlyle.

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THOMAS CARLYLE

CHAPTER I

EARLY LIFE

'A GREAT man,' says Hegel, 'condemns the world to the task of explaining him.' Emphatically does the remark apply to Thomas Carlyle. When he began to leave his impress in literature, he was treated as a confusing and inexplicable element. Opinion oscillated between the view of James Mill, that Carlyle was an insane rhapsodist, and that of Jeffrey, that he was afflicted with a chronic craze for singularity. Jeffrey's verdict sums up pretty effectively the attitude of the critics of the time to the new writer:—'I suppose that you will treat me as something worse than an ass, when I say that I am firmly persuaded the great source of your extravagance, and all that makes your writings intolerable to many and ridiculous to not a few, is not so much any real peculiarity of opinion, as an unlucky ambition to appear more original than you are.' The blunder made by Jeffrey in regard both to Carlyle and

Wordsworth emphasises the truth which critics seem reluctant to bear in mind, that, before the great man can be explained, he must be appreciated. Emphatically true of Carlyle it is that he creates the standard by which he is judged. Carlyle resembles those products of the natural world which biologists call 'sports'—products which, springing up in a spontaneous and apparently erratic way, for a time defy classification. The time is appropriate for an attempt to classify the great thinker, whose birth took place one hundred years ago.

Towards the close of the last century a stone-mason, named James Carlyle, started business on his own account in the village of Ecclefechan, Dumfriesshire. He was an excellent tradesman, and frugal withal; and in the year 1791 he married a distant kinswoman of his own, Janet Carlyle, who died after giving birth to a son. In the beginning of 1795 he married one Margaret Aitken, a worthy, intelligent woman; and on the 4th of December following a son was born, whom they called Thomas, after his paternal grandfather. This child was destined to be the most original writer of his time.

Little Thomas was early taught to read by his mother, and at the age of five he learnt to 'count' from his father. He was then sent to the village school; and in his seventh year he was reported to be 'complete' in English. As the schoolmaster was weak in

the classics, Tom was taught the rudiments of Latin by the burgher minister, of which strict sect James Carlyle was a zealous member. One summer morning, in 1806, his father took him to Annan Academy. 'It was a bright morning,' he wrote long years thereafter, 'and to me full of movement, of fluttering boundless hopes, saddened by parting with mother, with home, and which afterwards were cruelly disappointed.' At that 'doleful and hateful Academy,' to use his own words, Thomas Carlyle spent three years, learning to read French and Latin, and the Greek alphabet, as well as acquiring a smattering of geometry and algebra.

It was in the Academy that he got his first glimpse of Edward Irving—probably in April or May 1808—who had called to pay his respects to his old teacher, Mr Hope. Thomas's impression of him was that of a 'flourishing slip of a youth, with coal-black hair, swarthy clear complexion, very straight on his feet, and except for the glaring squint alone, decidedly handsome.' Years passed before young Carlyle saw Irving's face again.

James Carlyle, although an austere man, and the reverse of demonstrative, was bound up in his son, sparing no expense upon the youth's education. On one occasion he exclaimed, with an unwonted outburst of glee, 'Tom, I do not grudge thy schooling now, when thy uncle Frank owns thee to be a better arithmetician than himself.' Early recognising the natural

talent and aptitude of his son, he determined to send him to the nearest university, with a view to Thomas studying for the ministry. One crisp winter's morning, in 1809, found Thomas Carlyle on his way to Edinburgh, trudging the entire distance—one hundred miles or so.

He went through the usual university course, attended the divinity classes, and delivered the customary discourses in English and Latin. But Tom was not destined to 'wag his head in a pulpit,' for he had conscientious objections which parental control in no way interfered with. Referring to this vital period of his life, Carlyle wrote: 'His [father's] tolerance for me, his trust in me, was great. When I declined going forward into the Church (though his heart was set upon it), he respected my scruples, my volition, and patiently let me have my way.' Carlyle never looked back to his university life with satisfaction. In his interesting recollections Mr Moncure Conway represents Carlyle, describing his experiences as follows: —'Very little help did I get from anybody in those years, and, as I may say, no sympathy at all in all this old town. And if there was any difference, it was found least where I might most have hoped for it. There was Professor——. For years I attended his lectures, in all weathers and all hours. Many and many a time, when the class was called together, it was found to consist of one individual—to wit, of him now speaking; and still oftener, when others were present, the

only person who had at all looked into the lesson assigned was the same humble individual. I remember no instance in which these facts elicited any note or comment from that instructor. He once requested me to translate a mathematical paper, and I worked through it the whole of one Sunday, and it was laid before him, and it was received without remark or thanks. After such long years, I came to part with him, and to get my certificate. Without a word, he wrote on a bit of paper: "I certify that Mr Thomas Carlyle has been in my class during his college course, and has made good progress in his studies." Then he rang a bell, and ordered a servant to open the front door for me. Not the slightest sign that I was a person whom he could have distinguished in any crowd. And so I parted from old ——.'

Professor Masson, who in loving, painstaking style has ferreted all the facts about Carlyle's university life, sums up in these words: 'Without assuming that he meant the university described in *Sartor Resartus* to stand literally for Edinburgh University, of his own experience, we have seen enough to show that any specific training of much value he considered himself to owe to his four years in the Arts classes in Edinburgh University, was the culture of his mathematical faculty under Leslie, and that for the rest he acknowledged merely a certain benefit from being in so many class-rooms where matters intellectual were professedly

in the atmosphere, and where he learned to take advantage of books.' As Carlyle put it in his Rectorial Address of 1866, 'What I have found the university did for me is that it taught me to read in various languages, in various sciences, so that I go into the books which treated of these things, and gradually penetrate into any department I wanted to make myself master of, as I found it suit me.'

In 1814, Carlyle obtained the mathematical tutorship at Annan. Out of his slender salary of £60 or £70 he was able to save something, so that he was practically independent. By and by James Carlyle gave up his trade, and settled on a small farm at Mainhill, about two miles from Ecclefechan. Thither Thomas hied with unfeigned delight at holiday time, for he led the life of a recluse at Annan, his books being his sole companions.

Edward Irving, to whom Carlyle was introduced in college days, was now settled as a dominie in Kirkcaldy. His teaching was not favourably viewed by some of the parents, who started a rival school, and resolved to import a second master, with the result that Carlyle was selected. Irving, with great magnanimity, gave him a cordial welcome to the 'Lang Toon,' and the two Annandale natives became fast friends. The elder placed his well-selected library at the disposal of the younger, and together they explored the whole countryside. Short visits to Edinburgh had

a special attraction for both, where they met with a few kindred spirits. On one of those visits, Carlyle, who had not cut off his connection with the university, called at the Divinity Hall to put down his name formally on the annual register. In his own words: 'Old Dr Ritchie "not at home" when I called to enter myself. "Good!" answered I; "*let the omen be fulfilled.*"' Carlyle's studies in Kirkcaldy made him eager to contribute to the fulfilment of the omen. Among the authors which he read out of the Edinburgh University library was Gibbon, who pushed Carlyle's sceptical questionings to a definite point. In a conversation with Professor Masson, Carlyle stated that to his reading of Gibbon he dated the extirpation from his mind of the last remnant that had been left in it of the orthodox belief in miracles.

In the space of two years, Carlyle and Irving 'got tired of schoolmastering and its mean contradictions and poor results.' They bade Kirkcaldy farewell and made for Edinburgh,—Irving to lodge in Bristo Street, 'more expensive rooms than mine,' naively remarks Carlyle, where he gave breakfasts to 'intellectualities he fell in with, I often a guest with them. They were but stupid intellectualities, etc.' As for their prospects, this is what Carlyle says: 'Irving's outlooks in Edinburgh were not of the best, considerably checkered with dubiety, opposition, and even flat disfavour in some quarters; but at least they were far superior to

mine, and indeed, I was beginning my four or five most miserable, dark, sick, and heavy-laden years; Irving, after some staggerings aback, his seven or eight healthiest and brightest. He had as one item several good hundreds of money to wait upon. My *peculium* I don't recollect, but it could not have exceeded £100. I was without friends, experience, or connection in the sphere of human business, was of shy humour, proud enough and to spare, and had begun my long curriculum of dyspepsia which has never ended since!'* Carlyle's intention was to study for the Bar, if perchance he could eke out a livelihood by private teaching. He obtained one or two pupils, wrote a stray article or so for the 'Encyclopædias'; but as he barely managed to pay his way, he speedily gave up his law studies. He was at this time—the winter of 1819—'advancing,' as he phrases it, 'towards huge instalments of bodily and spiritual wretchedness in this my Edinburgh purgatory.' It was about a couple of years thereafter ere Carlyle went through what he has described as his 'spiritual new birth.'

When Carlyle was in diligent search for congenial employment, a certain Captain Basil Hall crossed his path, to whom Edward Irving had given lessons in mathematics. The 'small lion,' as he calls the captain, came to Carlyle, and wished the latter to go out with him 'to Dunglas,' and there do 'lunars' in his

* *Reminiscences*, vol. i. p. 141.

name, he looking on and learning of Carlyle 'what would come of its own sweet will.' The said 'lunars' meanwhile were to go to the Admiralty, 'testifying there what a careful studious Captain he was, and help to get him promotion, so the little wretch smilingly told me.' Carlyle adds: 'I remember the figure of him in my dim lodging as a gay, crackling, sniggering spectre, one dusk, and endeavouring to seduce my affability in lieu of liberal wages into this adventure. Wages, I think, were to be smallish ("so poor are we"), but then the great Playfair is coming on visit. "You will see Professor Playfair." I had not the least notion of such an enterprise on these shining terms, and Captain Basil with his great Playfair *in posse* vanished for me into the shades of dusk for good.'* When private teaching would not come Carlyle's way, he timorously aimed towards 'literature.' He had taken to the study of German, and conscious of his own powers in that direction, he applied in vain to more than one London bookseller, proposing a complete translation of Schiller. Irving not only did his utmost to comfort Carlyle in his spiritual wrestlings, but he tried to find him employment. The two friends continued to make pleasant excursions, and in June 1821 Irving brought Carlyle to Haddington, an event which was destined to colour all his subsequent life; for it was then and there he first saw Jane Welsh, a sight, he acknowledged, for ever memorable to him.

* *Reminiscences*, vol. i. p. 142.

'In the ancient county town of Haddington, July 14, 1801, there was born,' wrote Thomas Carlyle in 1869, 'to a lately wedded pair, not natives of the place but already reckoned among the best class of people there, a little daughter whom they named Jane Baillie Welsh, and whose subsequent and final name (her own common signature for many years) was *Jane Welsh Carlyle*, and now so stands, now that she is mine in death only, on her and her father's tombstone in the Abbey Kirk of that town. July 14, 1801; I was then in my sixth year, far away in every sense, now near and infinitely concerned, trying doubtfully after some three years' sad cunctation, if there is anything that I can profitably put on record of her altogether bright, beneficent and modest little life, and *her*, as my final task in this world.' * The picture was never completed by the master-hand; the 'effort was too distressing'; so all his notes and letters were handed over to a literary executor.

At the time of Carlyle's introduction to Miss Welsh, she was living with her widowed mother. Her father, Dr John Welsh, came of a good family, and was a popular country physician. Her mother was Grace Welsh of Capelgill, and was reckoned a beautiful, but haughty woman. Their marriage took place in 1800, and their only child, Jane, was born, as we have seen, the year following. Her most intimate friend, Miss

* *Reminiscences*, vol. ii. p. 69.

Geraldine Jewsbury, tells us that Miss Welsh had 'a graceful and beautifully-formed figure, upright and supple, a delicate complexion of creamy white, with a pale rose tint in the cheeks, lovely eyes full of fire and softness, and with great depths of meaning.' She had a musical voice, was a good talker, extremely witty, and so fascinating in every way that a relative of hers told Miss Jewsbury that every man who spoke to her for five minutes felt impelled to make her an offer of marriage. Be that as it may, it *is* certain that Miss Jane Welsh had troops of suitors in and around the quiet country town. She always spoke of her mother with deep affection and great admiration. Her father she reverenced, and he was the only person during her girlhood who had any real influence over her. This, then, was the young lady of whom Thomas Carlyle carried back to Edinburgh a sweet and lasting impression. They corresponded at intervals, and Thomas was permitted to send her books occasionally.

Edward Irving used to live in Dr Welsh's house when he taught in the local school, and he led Jeannie —a winsome, wilful lass—to take an interest in the classics. She entertained a girlish passion for the handsome youth, and there can be little doubt that they would have ultimately been married, were it not that the eldest daughter of a Kirkcaldy parson, Miss Martin, had managed to charm Irving for the time being,' and an engagement followed.

Before Carlyle had drifted into Edinburgh he had, of course, heard of the fame of Francis Jeffrey. He heard him once speaking in the General Assembly 'on some poor cause.' Jeffrey's pleading seemed to Carlyle 'abundantly clear, full of liveliness, free flowing ingenuity.' 'My admiration,' he adds, 'went frankly with that of others, but I think it was hardly of very deep character.' When Carlyle was in the 'slough of despond,' he bethought him of Jeffrey, this time as editor of the *Edinburgh Review*. He resolved to try the 'great man' with an actual contribution. The subject was a condemnation of a new French book, in which a mechanical theory of gravitation was elaborately worked out by the author. He got 'a certain feeble but enquiring quasi-disciple' of his own to act as amanuensis, from whom he kept his ulterior purpose quite secret. Looking back through the dim vista of seven-and-forty years, this is what Carlyle says of that anxious time: 'Well do I remember those dreary evenings in Bristo Street; oh, what ghastly passages and dismal successive spasms of attempt at "literary enterprise"! . . . My "Review of Pictet" all fairly written out in George Dalgleish's good clerk hand, I penned some brief polite note to the great editor, and walked off with the small parcel one night to his address in George Street. I very well remember leaving it with his valet there, and disappearing in the night with various thoughts and doubts! My hopes had never

risen high, or in fact risen at all; but for a fortnight or so they did not quite die out, and then it was in absolute zero; no answer, no return of MS., absolutely no notice taken, which was a form of catastrophe more complete than even I had anticipated! There rose in my head a pungent little note which might be written to the great man, with neatly cutting considerations offered him from the small unknown ditto; but I wisely judged it was still more dignified to let the matter lie as it was, and take what I had got for my own benefit only. Nor did I ever mention it to almost anybody, least of all to Jeffrey in subsequent changed times, when at anyrate it was fallen extinct.' *

Carlyle's star was, however, in the ascendant, for in 1822 he became tutor to the two sons of a wealthy lady, Mrs Charles Buller, at a salary of £200 a year. It was through Irving that this appointment came. The young lads boarded with 'a good old Dr Fleming' in George Square, whither Carlyle went daily from his lodgings at 3 Moray Street, Pilrig Street. The Bullers finally returned to London, Carlyle staying at his father's little homestead of Mainhill to finish a translation of 'Wilhelm Meister.' He followed the Bullers to London, where he resigned the tutorship in the hope of getting some literary work.

Irving introduced him to the proprietor of the *London Magazine*, who offered Carlyle sixteen

* *Reminiscences*, vol. ii. pp. 18, 19.

guineas a sheet for a series of 'Portraits of Men of Genius and Character.' The first was to be a life of Schiller, which appeared in that periodical in 1823-4. Mr Boyd, the Edinburgh publisher, accepted the translation of 'Wilhelm Meister.' 'Two years before,' wrote Carlyle in his *Reminiscences*, 'I had at length, after some repulsions, got into the heart of "Wilhelm Meister," and eagerly read it through; my sally out, after finishing, along the vacant streets of Edinburgh, a windless, Scotch-misty Saturday night, is still vivid to me. "Grand, surely, harmoniously built together, far-seeing, wise, and true. When, for many years, or almost in my whole life before, have I read such a book?"' A short letter from Goethe in Weimar, in acknowledgment of a copy of his 'Wilhelm Meister,' was peculiarly gratifying to Carlyle.

Carlyle was not happy in London; dyspepsia and 'the noises' sorely troubled him. He was anxious to be gone. To the surprise of Irving—who was now settled in the metropolis—and everybody else, he resolutely decided to return to Annandale, where his father had leased for him a compact little farm at Hoddam Hill, three miles from Mainhill, and visible from the fields at the back of it. 'Perhaps it was the very day before my departure,' wrote Carlyle, 'at least it is the last I recollect of him [Irving], we were walking in the streets multifariously discoursing; a dim grey day, but dry and airy. At the corner of Cockspur

Street we paused for a moment, meeting Sir John Sinclair ("Statistical Account of Scotland" etc.), whom I had never seen before and never saw again. A lean old man, tall but stooping, in tartan cloak, face very wrinkly, nose blue, physiognomy vague and with distinction as one might have expected it to be. He spoke to Irving with benignant respect, whether to me at all I don't recollect.'

Carlyle shook the dust of London from off his feet, and by easy stages made his way northwards. Arrived at Ecclefechan, within two miles of his father's house, while the coach was changing horses, Carlyle noticed through the window his little sister Jean earnestly looking up for him. She, with Jenny, the youngest of the family, was at school in the village, and had come out daily to inspect the coach in hope of seeing him. 'Her bonny little blush and radiancy of look when I let down the window and suddenly disclosed myself,' wrote Carlyle in 1867, 'are still present to me.' On the 26th of May 1825, he established himself at Hoddam Hill, and set about 'German Romance.' His brother Alick managed the farm, and his mother, with one of the girls, was generally there to look after his comforts.

During the intervening years, Carlyle's intimacy with Miss Jane Welsh gradually increased, with occasional differences. She had promised to marry him if he could 'achieve independence.' Carlyle's idea was that

after their marriage they should settle upon the farm of Craigenputtock, which had been in the possession of the Welsh family for generations, and devote himself to literary work. By and by Miss Welsh accepted his offer of marriage, but not until she had acquainted him of the Irving incident. The wedding took place on the 17th of October 1825, and the young couple took up housekeeping in a quiet cottage at Comely Bank, Edinburgh. Of his life at this period, the best description is given by Carlyle himself, in a letter to Mrs Basil Montague, dated Christmas Day 1826:—

'In spite of ill-health I reckon myself moderately happy here, much happier than men usually are, or than such a fool as I deserve to be. My good wife exceeds all my hopes, and is, in truth, I believe, among the best women that the world contains. The philosophy of the heart is far better than that of the understanding. She loves me with her whole soul, and this one sentiment has taught her much that I have long been vainly at the schools to learn. . . . On the whole, what I chiefly want is occupation; which, when the times grow better, or my own genius gets more alert and thorough-going, will not fail, I suppose, to present itself. . . . Some day—oh, that the day were here!—I shall surely speak out those things that are lying in me, and give me no sleep till they are spoken! Or else, if the Fates would be so kind as to shew me—that I had nothing to say! This, perhaps, is the real secret of it

after all; a hard result, yet not intolerable, were it once clear and certain. Literature, it seems, is to be my trade, but the present aspects of it among us seem to me peculiarly perplexed and uninviting.' * Here, as in undertone, we discover what Professor Masson calls the constitutional sadness of Carlyle—a sadness which, along with indifferent health, led him to be impatient at trifles, morbid, proud, and at times needlessly aggressive in speech and demeanour. These traits, however, in the early years of married life were not specially visible; and on the whole the Comely Bank period may be described as one of calm happiness. Carlyle's forecast was correct. Literature was to be his trade.

In the following spring came a letter to Carlyle from Procter (Barry Cornwall), whom he had met in London, offering to introduce him formally to Jeffrey, whom he certified to be a 'very fine fellow.' One evening Carlyle sallied forth from Comely Bank for Jeffrey's house in George Street, armed with Procter's letter. He was shown into the study. 'Five pair of candles,' he relates, 'were cheerfully burning, in the light of which sate my famous little gentleman; laid aside his work, cheerfully invited me to sit, and began talking in a perfectly human manner.' The interview lasted for about twenty minutes, during which time Jeffrey had made kind enquiries what his visitor was doing and what he had published; adding, 'We must give you a

* Masson's 'Edinburgh Sketches and Memories,' pp. 329-30.

lift,' an offer, Carlyle says, which in 'some complimentary way' he managed to Jeffrey's satisfaction to decline. Jeffrey returned Carlyle's call, when he was captivated by Mrs Carlyle. The intimacy rapidly increased, and a short paper by Carlyle on Jean Paul appeared in the very next issue of the *Edinburgh Review*. 'It made,' says the author, 'what they call a sensation among the Edinburgh buckrams; which was greatly heightened next number by the more elaborate and grave article on "German Literature" generally, which set many tongues wagging, and some few brains considering, *what* this strange monster could be that was come to disturb their quiescence and the established order of Nature! Some newspapers or newspaper took to denouncing "the Mystic School," which my bright little woman declared to consist of me alone, or of her and me, and for a long while after merrily used to designate me by that title.'

Mrs Carlyle proved an admirable hostess; Jeffrey became a frequent visitor at Comely Bank, and they discovered 'mutual old cousinships' by the maternal side. Jeffrey's friendship was an immense acquisition to Carlyle, and everybody regarded it as his highest good fortune. The *literati* of Edinburgh came to see her, and 'listen to her husband's astonishing monologues.' To Carlyle's regret, Jeffrey would not talk in their frequent rambles of his experiences in the world, 'nor of things concrete and current,' but was 'theoretic

generally'; and seemed bent on converting Carlyle from his 'German mysticism,' back merely, as the latter could perceive, into 'dead Edinburgh Whiggism, scepticism, and materialism'; 'which I felt,' says Carlyle, 'to be a for ever impossible enterprise.' They had long discussions, 'parryings, and thrustings,' which 'I have known continue night after night,' relates Carlyle, 'till two or three in the morning (when I was his guest at Craigcrook, as once or twice happened in coming years): there we went on in brisk logical enterprise with all the rest of the house asleep, and parted usually in good humour, though after a game which was hardly worth the candle. I found him infinitely witty, ingenious, sharp of fence, but not in any sense deep; and used without difficulty to hold my own with him.' Jeffrey did everything in his power to further Carlyle's prospects and projects. He tried to obtain for him the professorship of Moral Philosophy at St Andrews University, vacated by Dr Chalmers. Testimonials were given by Irving, Brewster, Buller, Wilson, Jeffrey, and Goethe. They failed, however, in consequence of the opposition of the Principal, Dr Nicol.

To Carlyle, doubtless, the most memorable incidents of the Edinburgh period was his correspondence with Goethe. The magnetic spell thrown over Carlyle by Goethe will ever remain a mystery. Between the two men there was no intellectual affinity. One would

have expected Goethe the Pagan to have repelled Carlyle the Puritan, unless we have recourse to the philosophy of opposites, and conclude that the tumultuous soul of Carlyle found congenial repose in the Greek-like restfulness of Goethe. The great German had been deeply impressed by the profound grasp which Carlyle was displaying of German literature. After reading a letter which he had received from Walter Scott, Goethe remarked to Eckermann: "I almost wonder that Walter Scott does not say a word about Carlyle, who has so decided a German tendency that he must certainly be known to him. It is admirable in Carlyle, that, in his judgment of our German authors, he has especially in view the *mental and moral core* as that which is really influential. Carlyle is a *moral force of great importance;* there is in him much for the future and we cannot foresee what he will produce and effect.'

CHAPTER II

CRAIGENPUTTOCK—LITERARY EFFORTS

CARLYLE was feeling the force of Scott's remark that literature was a bad crutch—his prospects being far from bright. The Carlyles had been a little over eighteen months at Comely Bank, when their extensive circle of friends were surprised to hear of their intended withdrawal to Craigenputtock. Efforts were made to dissuade Carlyle from pursuing what at the time appeared a suicidal course. He was the intimate associate of the brilliant Jeffrey; he was within the charmed circle of Edinburgh Reviewers; he had laid the foundation of a literary reputation. Outwardly all seemed well with Carlyle; but 'the step,' himself says, 'had been well meditated, saw itself to be founded on irrefragable considerations of health, finance, &c., &c., unknown to bystanders, and could not be forborne or altered.' Next to his marriage with Miss Welsh, Carlyle's retirement to the howling wilds of Craigenputtock at that juncture was the most momentous step in his long life. He was conscious of his own powers, and he clearly discerned how those powers could best

be utilised and developed. Hence his determination to bid adieu to Edinburgh. And in that resolve he was fortified by the loyal support of his wife.

Jeffrey promised to visit the Carlyles at Craigenputtock as soon as they got settled. Meanwhile, they stayed a week at his own house in Moray Place, after their furniture was on the road, and they were waiting till it should arrive and 'render a new home possible amid the moors and the mountains.' 'Of our history at Craigenputtock,' says Carlyle, 'there might a great deal be written which might amuse the curious; for it was in fact a very singular scene and arena for such a pair as my darling and me, with such a life ahead. . . . It is a history which I by no means intend to write, with such or with any object. To me there is a *sacredness* of interest in it consistent only with *silence*. It was the field of endless nobleness and beautiful talent and virtue in her who is now gone; also of good industry, and many loving and blessed thoughts in myself, while living there by her side. Poverty and mean obstruction had given origin to it, and continued to preside over it, but were transformed by human valour of various sorts into a kind of victory and royalty. Something of high and great dwelt in it, though nothing could be smaller and lower than many of the details.'*

* *Reminiscences*, vol. ii. p. 30.

The Jeffreys were not slow in appearing at Craigenputtock. Their 'big carriage,' narrates the humorous host, 'climbed our rugged hill-roads, landed the three guests—Charlotte ("Sharlie"), with pa and ma—and the clever old valet maid that waited on them; . . . but I remember nothing so well as the consummate art with which my dear one played the domestic field-marshal, and spread out our exiguous resources, without fuss or bustle; to cover everything, a coat of hospitality and even elegance and abundance. I have been in houses ten times, nay, a hundred times, as rich, where things went not so well. Though never bred to this, but brought up in opulent plenty by a mother that could bear no partnership in housekeeping, she, finding it become necessary, loyally applied herself to it, and soon surpassed in it all the women I have ever seen.' * Of Mrs Carlyle's frankness her husband gives this amusing glimpse: 'One day at dinner, I remember, Jeffrey admired the fritters or bits of pancake he was eating, and she let him know, not without some vestige of shock to him, that she had made them. "What, you! twist up the frying-pan, and catch them in the air?" Even so, my high friend, and you may turn it over in your mind!' When the Jeffreys were leaving, 'I remarked,' says Carlyle, that they 'carried off our little temporary paradise; . . . to which bit of pathos Jeffrey answered by a friendly little sniff of

* *Reminiscences*, vol. ii. p. 31.

quasi-mockery or laughter through the nose, and rolled prosperously away.'

The Carlyles in course of time visited the Jeffreys at Craigcrook, the last occasion being for about a fortnight. Carlyle says it was 'a shining sort of affair, but did not in effect accomplish much for any of us. Perhaps, for one thing, we stayed too long, Jeffrey was beginning to be seriously incommoded in health, had bad sleep, cared not how late he sat, and we had now more than ever a series of sharp fencing bouts, night after night, which could decide nothing for either of us, except our radical incompatibility in respect of world theory, and the incurable divergence of our opinions on the most important matters. "You are so dreadfully in earnest!" said he to me once or oftener. Besides, I own now I was deficient in reverence to him, and had not then, nor, alas! have ever acquired, in my solitary and mostly silent existence, the art of gently saying strong things, or of insinuating my dissent, instead of uttering it right out at the risk of offence or otherwise.' Then he adds: 'These "stormy sittings," as Mrs Jeffrey laughingly called them, did not improve our relation to one another. But these were the last we had of that nature. In other respects Edinburgh had been barren; effulgences of "Edinburgh society," big dinners, parties, we in due measure had; but nothing there was very interesting either to *her* or to me, and all of it passed away as an obliging

pageant merely. Well do I remember our return to Craigenputtock, after nightfall, amid the clammy yellow leaves and desolate ruins, with the clink of Alick's stithy alone audible of human.' *

It was during his first two years' residence at Craigenputtock that Carlyle wrote his famous essay on Burns; but his principal work was upon German literature, especially upon Goethe. His magazine writings being his only means of support, and as he devoted much time to them, it is not surprising that financial matters worried him. About this time Jeffrey, to whom doubtless he confided his trouble, generously offered to confer upon him an annuity of £100, which Carlyle declined to accept. Jeffrey repeated the offer on two subsequent occasions, with a like result. Carlyle in his *Reminiscences* says that he could not doubt but Jeffrey had intended an act of real generosity; and yet Carlyle penned the ungracious remark, that 'perhaps there was something in the manner of it that savoured of consciousness and of screwing one's self up to the point; less of god-like pity for a fine fellow and his struggles, than of human determination to do a fine action of one's own, which might add to the promptitude of my refusal.' It is not surprising, therefore, to find Carlyle suspecting that Jeffrey's feelings were cooling towards him. Jeffrey had powers of penetration as well as the friend whom he was anxious to assist.

* *Reminiscences*, vol. ii. pp. 40, 41.

By the month of February 1831, Carlyle's finances fell so low that he had only £5 in his possession, and expected no more for months. Then he borrowed £100 from Jeffrey, as his 'pitiful bits of periodical literature incomings,' as he puts it, 'having gone awry (as they were liable to do), but was able, I still remember with what satisfaction, to repay punctually within a few weeks'; adding, 'and this was all of pecuniary chivalry *we* two ever had between us.' The chivalry was all on the one side—of Jeffrey. The outcome of his labours at Craigenputtock, in addition to the fragmentary articles already referred to, was the essays which form the first three volumes of the 'Miscellanies.' They appeared chiefly in the *Edinburgh Review*, the *Foreign Review*, and *Fraser's Magazine*. Jeffrey's resignation of the editorship of the 'Review' was a great disappointment to Carlyle, because it stopped a regular source of income.

German literature, of which Carlyle had begun a history, not being a 'marketable commodity,' he cut it up into articles. 'My last considerable bit of writing at Craigenputtock,' says Carlyle, 'was "Sartor Resartus"; done, I think, between January and August 1830; my sister Margaret had died while it was going on. I well remember when and how (at Templand one morning) the germ of it rose above ground. "Nine months," I used to say, "it had cost me in writing." Had the perpetual fluctuation, the uncertainty and un-

intelligible whimsicality of Review Editors not proved so intolerable, we might have lingered longer at Craigenputtock, perfectly left alone, and able to do more work, beyond doubt, than elsewhere. But a book did seem to promise some respite from that, and perhaps further advantages. Teufelsdröckh was ready; and (first days of August) I decided to make for London. Night before going, how I still remember it! I was lying on my back on the sofa in the drawing-room; she sitting by the table (late at night, packing all done, I suppose); her words had a guise of sport, but were profoundly plaintive in meaning. "About to part, who knows for how long; and what may have come in the interim!" this was her thought, and she was evidently much out of spirits. "Courage, dearie, only for a month!" I would say to her in some form or other. I went next morning early.'*

Jeffrey, who was by that time Lord Advocate, Carlyle found much preoccupied in London, but willing to assist him with Murray, the bookseller. Jeffrey, with his wife and daughter, lived in Jermyn Street in lodgings, 'in melancholy contrast to the beautiful tenements and perfect equipments they had left in the north.' 'If,' says Carlyle, 'I called in the morning, in quest perhaps of letters (though I don't recollect much troubling him in that way), I would find the family still at breakfast, ten A.M. or later; and have

* *Reminiscences*, vol. ii. pp. 161, 162.

seen poor Jeffrey emerge in flowered dressing-gown, with a most boiled and suffering expression of face, like one who had slept miserably, and now awoke mainly to paltry misery and bother; poor official man! "I am made a mere post-office of!" I heard him once grumble, after tearing up several packets, not one of which was internally for himself.'*

Mrs Carlyle joined her husband on the 1st of October 1831, and they took lodgings at 4 Ampton Street, Gray's Inn Lane, with a family of the name of Miles, belonging to Irving's congregation. Jeffrey was a frequent visitor there, and sometimes the Carlyles called at Jermyn Street. Carlyle says that they were at first rather surprised that Jeffrey did not introduce him to some of his 'grand literary figures,' or try in some way to be of help to one for whom he evidently had a value. The explanation, Carlyle thinks, was that he himself 'expressed no trace of aspiration that way'; that Jeffrey's 'grand literary or other figures' were clearly by no means 'so adorable to the rustic hopelessly Germanised soul as an introducer of one might have wished.' Besides, Jeffrey was so 'heartily miserable,' as to think Carlyle and his other fellow-creatures happy in comparison, and to have no care left to bestow upon them.

Here is a characteristic outburst in the 'Reminiscences': 'The beggarly history of poor "Sartor"

* *Reminiscences*, vol. ii. p. 47.

among the blockheadisms is not worth recording or remembering—least of all here! In short, finding that whereas I had got £100 (if memory serve) for "Schiller" six or seven years before, and for "Sartor," at least thrice as good, I could not only not get £200, but even get no Murray, or the like, to publish it on half-profits (Murray, a most stupendous object to me; tumbling about, eyeless, with the evidently strong wish to say "yes and no"; my first signal experience of that sad human predicament); I said, "We will make it no, then; wrap up our MS.; wait till this Reform Bill uproar abate."'*

On Tuesday, January 26th, 1832, Carlyle received tidings of the death of his father. He departed on the Sunday morning previous 'almost without a struggle,' wrote his favourite sister Jane. It was a heavy stroke for Carlyle. 'Natural tears,' he exclaimed shortly afterwards, 'have come to my relief. I can look at my dear father, and that section of the past which he has made alive for me, in a certain sacred, sanctified light, and give way to what thoughts rise in me without feeling that they are weak and useless.' Carlyle determined that the time till the funeral was past (Friday) should be spent with his wife only. All others were excluded. He walked 'far and much,' chiefly in the Regent's Park, and considered about many things, his object being to see clearly what his

* *Reminiscences*, vol. ii. p. 162.

calamity meant—what he lost, and what lesson that loss was to teach him. Carlyle considered his father as one of the most interesting men he had known. 'Were you to ask me,' he said, 'which had the greater natural faculty,' Robert Burns or my father, 'I might, perhaps, actually pause before replying. Burns had an infinitely wider education, my father a far wholesomer. Besides, the one was a man of musical utterance; the other wholly a man of action, with speech subservient thereto. Never, of all the men I have seen, has one come personally in my way in whom the endowment from nature and the arena from fortune were so utterly out of all proportion. I have said this often, and partly know it. As a man of speculation—had culture ever unfolded him—he must have gone wild and desperate as Burns; but he was a man of conduct, and work keeps all right. What strange shapeable creatures we are!'* Nothing that the elder Carlyle undertook to do but he did it faithfully, and like a true man. 'I shall look,' said his distinguished son, 'on the houses he built with a certain proud interest. They stand firm and sound to the heart all over his little district. No one that comes after him will ever say, "Here was the finger of a hollow eye-servant." They are little texts for me of the gospel of man's free will. Nor will his deeds and sayings in any case be found unworthy—not false and barren, but genuine and fit. Nay, am

* *Reminiscences*, vol. i. p. 19.

not I also the humble James Carlyle's work? I owe him much more than existence; I owe him a noble inspiring example (now that I can read it in that rustic character). It was he *exclusively* that determined on *educating* me; that from his small hard-earned funds sent me to school and college, and made me whatever I am or may become. Let me not mourn for my father, let me do worthily of him. So shall he still live even here in me, and his worth plant itself honourably forth into new generations.'* One of the wise men about Ecclefechan told James Carlyle: 'Educate a boy, and he grows up to despise his ignorant parents.' His father once told Carlyle this, and added: 'Thou hast not done so; God be thanked for it.' When James Carlyle first entered his son's house at Craigenputtock, Mrs Carlyle was greatly struck with him, 'and still farther,' says her husband, 'opened my eyes to the treasure I possessed in a father.'

The last time Carlyle saw his father was a few days before leaving for London. 'He was very kind,' wrote Carlyle, 'seemed prouder of me than ever. What he had never done the like of before, he said, on hearing me express something which he admired, "Man, it's surely a pity that thou shouldst sit yonder with nothing but the eye of Omniscience to see thee, and thou with such a gift to speak."' In closing his affectionate tribute, Carlyle exclaims: 'Thank Heaven, I know and have

* *Reminiscences*, vol. i. p. 6.

known what it is to be a son; to love a father, as spirit can love spirit.'

The last days of March 1832 found the Carlyles back at Craigenputtock. A new tenant occupied the farm, and their days were lonelier than ever. Meanwhile 'Sartor Resartus' was appearing in *Fraser's Magazine*. The Editor reported that it 'excited the most unqualified disapprobation.' Nothing daunted, Carlyle pursued the 'noiseless tenor of his way,' throwing off articles on various subjects. Finding that Mrs Carlyle's health suffered from the gloom and solitude of Craigenputtock, they removed to Edinburgh in January 1833. Jeffrey was absent in 'official regions,' and Carlyle notes that they found a 'most dreary contemptible kind of element' in Edinburgh. But their stay there was not without its uses, for in the Advocates' Library Carlyle found books which had a great effect upon his line of study. He collected materials for his articles upon 'Cagliostro' and the 'Diamond Necklace.' At the end of four months, the Carlyles were back again at Craigenputtock.

August was a bright month for Thomas Carlyle, for it was then that Ralph Waldo Emerson visited him at his rural retreat. The Carlyles thought him 'one of the most lovable creatures' they had ever seen, and an unbroken friendship of nearly fifty years was begun. As winter approached, Carlyle's prospects were not very bright, and he once more turned his eyes towards

London, where the remainder of his life was to be spent. Before following him thither, it may be well to turn from the outer to the inner side of Carlyle's life, and study the forces which went to the making of his unique personality.

CHAPTER III

CARLYLE'S MENTAL DEVELOPMENT

THROUGH all the material struggles Carlyle's mind at Craigenputtock was gradually shaping itself round a theory of the Universe and Man, from which he drew inspiration in his future life work. Through his contributions to Magazines and Reviews there is traceable an original vein of thought and feeling which had its origin in the study of German literature. Carlyle's studies and musings took coherent, or, as some would say incoherent, shape in *Sartor Resartus*,—a book which appropriately was written in the stern solitude of Craigenputtock.

In order to acquire an adequate understanding of Carlyle as a thinker, attention has to be paid to the two dominating influences of his mental life—his early home training and German literature. In regard to the former, ancestry with Carlyle counts for much. He came of a sturdy Covenanting stock. Carlyle himself has left a graphic description of the religious environment of the Burghers, to which sect his father belonged. The congregation, under the ministry of a

certain John Johnston, who taught Carlyle his first Latin, worshipped in a little house thatched with heath. Of the simple faith, the stern piety and the rugged heroism of the old Seceders, Carlyle himself has left a photograph: 'Very venerable are those old Seceder clergy to me now when I look back. . . . Most figures of them in my time were hoary old men; men so like evangelists in modern vesture and poor scholars and gentlemen of Christ I have nowhere met with among Protestant or Papal clergy in any country in the world. . . . Strangely vivid are some twelve or twenty of those old faces whom I used to see every Sunday, whose names, employments or precise dwellingplaces I never knew, but whose portraits are yet clear to me as in a mirror. Their heavy-laden, patient, ever-attentive faces, fallen solitary most of them, children all away, wife away for ever, or, it might be, wife still there and constant like a shadow and grown very like the old man, the thrifty cleanly poverty of these good people, their well-saved coarse old clothes, tailed waistcoats down to mid-thigh —all this I occasionally see as with eyes sixty or sixty-five years off, and hear the very voice of my mother upon it, whom sometimes I would be questioning about these persons of the drama and endeavouring to describe and identify them.' And what a glimpse we have into the inmost heart of the primitive Covenanting religion in the portrait drawn by Carlyle of old David Hope, the farmer who refused to postpone family

worship in order to take in his grain. David was putting on his spectacles when somebody rushed in with the words: 'Such a raging wind risen will drive the stooks into the sea if let alone.' 'Wind!' answered David, 'wind canna get ae straw that has been appointed mine. Sit down and let us worship God.' Far away from the simple Covenanting creed of his father and mother Carlyle wandered, but to the last the feeling of life's mystery and solemnity remained vivid with him, though fed from quite other sources than the Bible and the *Shorter Catechism.*

Much has been said of Carlyle's father, but it is highly probable that to his mother he owed most during his early years. The temperament of the Covenanter was of the non-conductor type. Men like James Carlyle were essentially stern, self-centred, unemotional. Fighting like the Jews, with sword in one hand and trowel in the other, they had no time for cultivating the softer side of human nature. Ready to go to the stake on behalf of religious liberty, they exercised a repressive, not to say despotic, influence in their own households. With them education meant not the unfolding of the individual powers of the children, but the ruthless crushing of them into a theological mould. Religion in such an atmosphere became loveless rather than lovely, and might have had serious influences of a reactionary nature but for the caressing tenderness of the mother. With a heart

which overflowed the ordinary theological boundaries, the mother in many sweet and hidden ways supplied the emotional element, which had been crushed out of the father by a narrow conception of life and duty. Carlyle's experience may be judged from his references to his parents. He always speaks of his father with profound respect and admiration; towards his mother his heart goes forth with a devotion which became stronger as the years rolled on. Carlyle's love of his mother was as beautiful as it was sacred. Long after Carlyle had parted with the creed of his childhood, his heart tremulously responded to the old symbols. His system of thought, indeed, might well be defined as Calvinism minus Christianity. Had Carlyle not come into contact with German thought, he would probably have jogged along the path of literature in more or less conventional fashion. In fact, nothing is more remarkable than the comparatively commonplace nature of Carlyle's early contributions to literature. Germany touched the deepest chords of his nature. With German ideas and emotions his mind was saturated, and *Sartor Resartus* was the outcome. To that book students must go for a glance into Carlyle's mind while he was wrestling with the great mysteries of Existence. In June 1821, as Mr Froude tells us, took place what may be called Carlyle's conversion—his triumph over his doubts, and the beginning of a new life. To understand this phase of Carlyle's life, we must pause

for a little to consider German literature, whence Carlyle derived spiritual relief and consolation.

What, then, was the nature of the message of peace which Germany, through Kant, Fichte, and Goethe, brought to the storm-tossed soul of Carlyle? When Carlyle began to think seriously, two antagonistic conceptions of life, the orthodox and the rationalist, were struggling for mastery in the field of thought. The orthodox conception, into which he had been born, and with which his father and mother had fronted the Eternities, had given way under the solvent of modern thought. Carlyle's belief in Christianity as a revelation seems to have dropped from him without much of a struggle, somewhat after the style of George Eliot. His mental tortures appear to have arisen from spiritual hunger, from an inability to fill the place vacated by the old beliefs. Had he lived fifty years earlier, Carlyle would have been invited to find salvation in the easy-going, drawing-room rationalism of Hume and Gibbon, or to content himself with the ecclesiastical placidity known as Moderatism.

Much had occurred since the arm-chair philosophers of Edinburgh taught that this was the best possible world, and that the highest wisdom consisted in frowning upon enthusiasm and cultivating the comfortable. The French Revolution had revolutionised men's thoughts and feelings. There had been revealed to man the inadequacy of the old Deistical or Mechanical

philosophy, which, spreading from England to France, had done so much to hasten the revolutionary epoch. Carlyle could find no spiritual sustenance in the purely mechanical theory of life which was offered as the substitute for the theory of the Churches. There was another theory, which had its rise in Germany, and to which Carlyle clung when he could no longer keep hold of the Supernatural. In Transcendentalism, Carlyle found salvation.

What are the leading conceptions of the German form of salvation? The answer to this will give the key to *Sartor Resartus*, and to Carlyle's whole mental outlook. In the eyes of thinkers like Carlyle, the great objection to Christianity was the breach it made between the natural and the supernatural. Between them there was a great gulf which could only fitfully and temporarily be bridged by the miraculous. Students who were being inoculated with scientific ideas of law and order, were bewildered by a theory of life which had no organic relation to the great germinal ideas of the day. In their desire to abolish the supernatural, the French thinkers constructed a theory of Nature in which everything, from the movements of solar masses to the movements of the soul, were interpreted in terms of matter. By adopting a mechanical view of the Universe, the French thinkers robbed Nature of much of its charm, and stunted the emotions on the side of wonder and admiration. The world was reduced to a

vast machine, man himself being simply a temporary embodiment of material particles in a highly complex and unique form. Instead of being what it was to the Greeks, a temple of beauty, the Universe to the materialist resembled a prison in which the walls gradually closed upon the poor wretch till he was crushed under the ruins. Goethe has left on record the impression made upon him by the materialistic view of life. As he says, 'The materialistic theory, which reduces all things to matter and motion, appeared to me so grey, so Cimmerian, and so dead that we shuddered at it as at a ghost.'

Sartor Resartus is studded with vigorous protests against the mechanical view of Nature and Man. Just as distasteful to Carlyle, and equally mechanical in spirit, was the Deistical conception of Nature as a huge clock, under the superintendence of a Divine clockmaker, whose duty consisted in seeing that the clock kept good time and was in all respects thoroughly reliable. The Germans attacked the problem from the other side. They did not abolish the supernatural with the materialists, or seek it in another world with the theologians; they found the supernatural in the natural. To the materialists, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel and Goethe had one reply:—Reduce matter to its constituent atoms, they argued, and you never seize the principle of life; it evades you like a spirit; in this principle everything lives and moves and has its being.

German philosophy from Kant has been occupied in attempts to trace the spiritual principle in the great process of cosmic evolution. In poetry, Goethe attempted to represent this as the energising principle of life and duty. The spiritual cannot be weighed in the scales of logic; it refuses to be put upon the dissecting-table. As a consequence, the truth of things is best seen by the poet. The owl-like logic-chopper, from his mechanical and utilitarian standpoint, sees not the Divine vision. This has been called Pantheism. Call it what we please, it is contradictory to Deism and Materialism, and is the root thought of *Sartor Resartus*, which may be taken as Carlyle's Confession of Faith. A few extracts will justify the foregoing analysis. The transcendental view of Nature is expressed by Carlyle thus:—'Atheistic science babbles poorly of it with scientific nomenclature, experiments and what not, as if it were a poor dead thing, to be bottled up in Leyden jars, and sold over counter; but the native sense of man in all times, if he will himself apply his sense, proclaims it to be a living thing—ah, an unspeakable, God-like thing, towards which the best attitude for us, after never so much science, is awe, devout prostration and humility of soul, worship, if not in words, then in silence.' Here, again, is a passage quite Hegelian in its tone: 'For matter, were it never so despicable, is Spirit; the manifestation of Spirit, were it never so despicable, cannot be more. The thing visible, nay, the

thing imagined, the thing in any way conceived as visible, what is it but a garment, a clothing of the higher celestial invisible and unimaginable formless, dark with excess of bright.'

The defects of Carlyle, and they are many, take their root in his speculative view of the Universe—a view which demands careful analysis if the student hopes to understand Carlyle's strength and weakness. It is not meant that Carlyle's mind remained anchored to the philosophic idealism of *Sartor*. In later days he professed contempt for transcendental moonshine, but his contempt was for the form and jargon of the schools, not for the spirit, which dominated Carlyle to the end. After Carlyle passed the early poetic stage, his views took more and more an anthropomorphic mould, till in many of his writings he seems practically a Theist. But at root Carlyle's thought was more Pantheistical than Deistical. What, then, is the German conception of the Ultimate Reality? The German answer grew out of an attempt to get rid of the difficulties propounded by Hume. Hume, the father of all the Empiricists, in giving logical effect to Berkeleyism, concluded that just as we know nothing of the outer world beyond sense impressions, so of the inner world of mind we know nothing beyond mental impressions. We can combine and recombine these impressions as we choose, but from them we cannot deduce any ultimate laws, either of the world or of

mind. Hume would not sanction belief in causation as a universal law. All that could be said was that certain things happened in a certain manner so frequently as to give rise to a law of expectation. But this is not to solve, but to evade the problem? We are still driven to ask, What is matter? What is motion? What is force? How do we get our knowledge of the material world, and is that knowledge reliable? These are wide questions that cannot be adequately handled here. It was a favourite argument of Comte and his followers, that man's first conceptions of Nature were necessarily erroneous, because they were anthropomorphic. Theology was, therefore, dethroned without ceremony. But science is as anthropomorphic as theology. We have no guarantee that the great facts of Nature are as we think them. We talk of Force, but our idea of Force is taken from experiences which may have no counterpart in Nature. It is well known, for example, that the secondary qualities of objects, colour, &c., do not exist in Nature. Our personality is so inextricably mixed with the material universe that it is impossible to formulate a philosophy like Naturalism, which makes mind a product of Nature, and which sharply defines the provinces of the two.

But what Naturalism fails to do, Idealism or Transcendentalism promises to perform. Idealism is simply Materialism turned upside down. The only difference

between the evolution of Spencer and of Hegel is that the one puts matter, the other mind, first. For all practical purposes, it signifies little whether mind is the temporary embodiment of an idea, or the temporary product of a highly specialised form of matter. In either case, man has no more freedom than the bubble upon the surface of the stream. We may discourse of the bubble as poetically or as practically as we please, the result is the same—absorption in the universal. Hegelianism as much as Naturalism leaves man a prisoner in the hands of Fate. The only difference is, that while Naturalism puts round the prisoner's neck a plain, unpretentious noose, Hegelianism adds fringes and embroidery. If there is no appeal from Nature's dread sentence, the less poetry and embroidery there is about the doleful business the better.

In *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle talks finely but vaguely, of the peace which came over his soul when he discovered that the universe was not mechanical but Divine. The peace was not of long duration. What consolation Carlyle derived from Idealism did not appear in his life. What a contrast between the poetic optimism of *Sartor* and the heavily-charged pessimism of old age, when Carlyle, with wailing pathos, exclaims that God does nothing. Carlyle's life abundantly illustrates the fact that whenever it leaves cloudland, Idealism sinks into scepticism more bitter and gloomy

than the unbelief of Naturalism. Carlyle approached the question of the Ultimate Reality from the wrong standpoint. He had no reasoned philosophic creed. A poet, he had the poetic dread of analysis, and his spirit revolted at the spectacle of Nature on the dissecting-table. He waged a life-long warfare against science. As the present writer has elsewhere remarked:—'Carlyle never could tolerate the evolution theory. He always spoke with the utmost contempt of Darwin, and everything pertaining to the development doctrines. It is somewhat startling to find that Carlyle was an evolutionist without knowing it. The antagonism between Carlyle and Spencer disappears on closer inspection. When Carlyle speaks of the universe as in very truth the star-domed city of God, and reminds us that through every crystal and through every grass blade, but most through every living soul, the glory of a present God still beams, he is simply saying in the language of poetry what Spencer says in the language of science, that the world of phenomena is sustained and energised by an infinite Eternal Power. Evolution is as emphatic as Carlyle on the absolute distinction between right and wrong. Carlyle and all the German school confront the evolutionary ethics with the Kantian categorical imperative. Surely the Evolutionists in the matter of an imperative out-rival the Intuitionalists, when, in addition to the dictates of conscience, they can call as a witness and sanction to

morality the testimony of all-embracing experience. In his famous saying, Might is Right, Carlyle was unconsciously formulating one aspect of evolutionary ethics. Carlyle did not mean anything so silly as that brute force and ethical sanctions are identical; what he meant was that in the long run Righteousness will prove the mightiest force in the universe. What is this but another version of the Spencerian doctrine of the survival of the fittest, which, in the most highly evolved state of society, will mean the survival of the best? In the highest social state the only Might that will survive will be the Might which is rooted in Right. Carlyle's contemptuous attitude towards science is deeply to be deplored. He waged bitter warfare against the evolution theory, quite oblivious of the fact that by means of it there was revealed a deeper insight into the Power behind Nature, and into the ethical constitution of the universe, than ever entered into the minds of transcendental philosophers.'

It is taken for granted that Carlyle's thoughts have no organic unity. He is looked upon as a stimulating, but confused, writer, as a thinker of original, but incoherent, power. True, he has not a logical mind, and pays no deference to the canons of the schools or the market-place. But there is a method in Carlyle's apparent caprice. When analysed, his thoughts are discovered to have unity. His transcendentalism em-

braces the ethic as well as the cosmic side of life. In the sphere of morals, as of science, his writings are one long tumultuous protest against the mechanical philosophy and the utilitarian theory of morals. From his essay on Voltaire we take the following:—'It is contended by many that our mere love of personal Pleasure or Happiness, as it is called, acting in every individual with such clearness as he may easily have, will of itself lead him to respect the rights of others, and wisely employ his own. . . . Without some belief in the necessary eternal, or, which is the same thing, in the supra mundane divine nature of Virtue existing in each individual, could the moral judgment of a thousand or a thousand thousand individuals avail us'? More picturesquely, Carlyle denounces the utilitarian system in these words: 'What then? Is the heroic inspiration we name Virtue but some passion, some bubble of the blood, bubbling in the direction others profit by? I know not; only this I know. If what thou namest Happiness be our true aim, then are we all astray. With Stupidity and sound Digestion, man may front much. But what in these dull, unimaginative days are the terrors of conscience to the diseases of the Liver? Not on Morality, but on Cookery, let us build our stronghold: there, brandishing our frying-pan as censer, let us offer sweet incense to the Devil, and live at ease on the fat things *he* has provided for his Elect'! The exponent of such

a theory of ethics will have a natural distaste for the rational or calculating side of conduct. He will depreciate the mechanical, and give undue emphasis to the inspirational. His heroes will be not men of placid temperament, methodical habits, and utilitarian aims, but men of mystical and passionate natures, spasmodic in action, and guided by ideas not easily justified at the bar of utility.

Just as in the sphere of speculative thought, he has profound contempt for the Diderots and Voltaires, with their mechanical views of the Universe, so in practical affairs Carlyle has contempt for the men who endeavour to further their aims by appealing to commonplace motives by means of commonplace methods. Specially opposed is he to the tendency of the age to rely for progress, not upon appeals to the great elemental forces of human nature, but upon organisations, committees, and all kinds of mechanism. In his remarkable essay, 'Signs of the Times,' we have ample verification of our exposition. After talking depreciatingly of the mechanical tendency of the prevailing philosophies, Carlyle comments upon the mechanical nature of the reforming agencies of civilisation. The intense Egoism of his nature rebels against any kind of Socialism or Collectivism. He says: 'Were we required to characterise this age of ours by any single epithet, we should be tempted to call it, not a Heroical, Devotional, Philosophical, or Heroic Age, but, above

all, the Mechanical Age. It is the age of machinery in every outward and inward sense of that word. . . . Men are grown mechanical in head and heart, as well as in hand. They have lost faith in individual endeavour, and in natural force of any kind. . . . We may trace this tendency in all the great manifestations of our time: in its intellectual aspect, the studies it most favours, and its manner of conducting them; in its practical aspects, its politics, art, religious work; in the whole sources, and throughout the whole current of its spiritual, no less than its material, activity.' With Carlyle the secrets of Nature and Life were discoverable, not so much by the intellect as by the heart. The man with the large heart, rather than the clear head, saw furthest into the nature of things. The history of German thought is strewn with the wreck of systems based upon the Carlylian doctrine of intuition. Schelling and Hegel showed the puerility to which great men are driven when they started to construct science out of their own intuitions, instead of patiently and humbly sitting down to study Nature. Tyndall has left on record his gratitude to Carlyle. Tyndall had grip of the scientific method, and was able to allow Carlyle's inspiration to play upon his mind without fear of harm; but how many waverers has Carlyle driven from the path of reason into the bogs of mysticism?

Carlyle's impatience with reasoning and his determination to follow the promptings of *a priori* concep-

tions gave his system of ethics a one-sided cast, and made him needlessly aggressive towards what in his day was called Utilitarianism, but what has now come to be known as Evolutionary Ethics. What is the chief end of man considered as a moral agent? The answer of the Christian religion is as intelligible as it is comprehensive. Man's duty consists in obeying the laws of God revealed in Nature and in the Bible. But apart from revelation, where is the basis of ethical authority? Debarred from accepting the Christian view, and instinctively repelled from Utilitarianism, Carlyle found refuge in the Fichtean and similar systems of ethics. By substituting Blessedness for Happiness as the aim of ethical endeavour, Carlyle endeavoured to preserve the heroic attitude which was associated with Supernaturalism. In his view, it was more consistent with human dignity to trust for inspiration to a light within than painfully to piece together fragments of human experience and ponder the inferences to be drawn therefrom.

In his 'Data of Ethics,' Herbert Spencer shows the hollowness of Carlyle's distinction between Blessedness and Happiness. As Spencer puts it: 'Obviously the implication is that Blessedness is not a kind of Happiness, and this implication at once suggests the question, What mode of feeling is this? If it is a state of consciousness at all, it is necessarily one of three states—painful, indifferent, or pleasurable. . . . . If the plea-

surable states are in excess, then the blessed life can be distinguished from any other pleasurable life only by the relative amount or the quality of its pleasures. It is a life which makes happiness of a certain kind and degree its end, and the assumption that blessedness is not a form of happiness lapses. . . . . In brief, blessedness has for its necessary condition of existence increased happiness, positive or negative in some consciousness or other; and disappears utterly if we assume that the actions called blessed are known to cause decrease of happiness in others as well as in the actor.'

To German philosophy and literature Carlyle owed his critical method, by which he all but revolutionised criticism as understood by his Edinburgh and London contemporaries. Carlyle began his apprenticeship with the Edinburgh Reviewers, in whose hand criticism never lost its political bias. Apart from that, criticism up till the time of Carlyle was mainly statical. The critic was a kind of literary book-keeper who went upon the double-entry system. On one page were noted excellences, on the other defects, and when the two columns were *totalled* the debtor and creditor side of the transaction was set forth. Where, as in the cases of Burns and Byron, genius was complicated with moral aberration, anything like a correct estimate was impossible. The result was that in Scotland criticism oscillated between the ethical severity of the pulpit and the daring laxity of free thought. As the Edinburgh

Reviewers could not afford to set the clergy at defiance, they had to pay due respect to conventional tastes and standards. Carlyle faced the question from a different standpoint. He introduced into criticism the dynamic principle which he found in the Germans, particularly in Goethe. In contemplating a work of Art, the Germans talk much of the importance of seizing upon the creative spirit, what Hegel called the Idea. The thought of Goethe and Hegel, though differently expressed, resolves itself into the conception of a life principle which shapes materials into harmony with innate forms. In the sphere of life the determining factors are the inner vitalities, which, however, are susceptible to the environment. The critic who would realise his ideal does not go about with literary and ethical tape-lines: he seeks to understand the spirit which animated the author as shewn in his works and his life, and then studies the influence of his environment. That this is a correct description of Carlyle's critical method is evidenced by his own remarks in his essay on Burns. He says: 'If an individual is really of consequence enough to have his life and character recorded for public remembrance, we have always been of opinion that the public ought to be made acquainted with all the springs and relations of his character. How did the world and man's life from his particular position represent themselves to his mind? How did co-existing circumstances

modify him from without: how did he modify these from within?'

This attention to the inner springs of character gives the key to Carlyle's critical work. How fruitful this was is seen in his essay on Burns. He steered an even course between the stern moralists, whose indignation at the sins of Burns the man blinded them to the genius of Burns the poet, and the flippant Bohemians, who thought that by bidding defiance to the conventionalities and moralities Burns proved his title to the name of genius, and whose voices are yet unduly with us in much spirituous devotion and rhymeless doggerel at the return of each 25th of January. While laying bare the springs of Burns' genius, Carlyle, with unerring precision, also puts his finger on the weak point in the poet's moral nature. So faithfully did Carlyle apply his critical method that he may be considered to have said the final word about Burns.

When Goethe spoke of Carlyle as a great moral force he must have had in his mind the ethical tone of Carlyle's critical writing—a tone which had its roots in the idea that judgment upon a man should be determined, not by isolated deviations from conventional or even ethical standards, but by consideration of the deep springs of character from which flow aspirations and ideals. In his *Heroes and Hero-Worship* Carlyle elaborates his critical theory thus: 'On the whole, we

make too much of faults; the details of the business hide the real centre of it. Faults? The greatest of faults, I should say, is to be conscious of none. Readers of the Bible above all, one would think, might know better. Who is called there "the man according to God's own heart?" David, the Hebrew King, had fallen into sins enough—blackest crimes—there was no want of sins. And thereupon the unbelievers sneer and ask: Is this your man according to God's heart? The sneer, I must say, seems to me but a shallow one. What are faults? What are the outward details of a life, if the inner secret of it, the remorse, temptations, true, often-baffled, never-ended struggle of it, be forgotten? . . . . The deadliest sin, I say, were that same supercilious consciousness of no sin: that is death. . . . . David's life and history, as written for us in those Psalms of his, I consider to be the truest emblem ever given of a man's moral progress and warfare here below.'

This canon faithfully applied enabled Carlyle to invest with a new and living interest large sections of literary criticism. Burns, Johnson, Cromwell and others of like calibre, were rescued by Carlyle from the hands of Pedants and Pharisees. To readers wearied with the facile criticism of conventional reviewers, it was a revelation to come into contact with a writer like Carlyle, who not only gave to the mind

great inspirational impetus, but also a larger critical outlook; it was like stepping out of a museum, or a dissecting-room into the free, fresh, breezy air of Nature.

Moreover, Carlyle's interest in the soul is not of an antiquarian nature; he studies his heroes as if they were ancestors of the Carlyle family. He broods over their letters as if they were the letters of his own flesh and blood, and his comments resemble the soliloquisings of a pathetic stricken kinsman rather than the conscious reflections of a literary man. It is noteworthy that Carlyle's critical powers are limited by his sympathies. His method, though suggestive of scientific criticism, is largely influenced by the personal equation. Face to face with writers like Scott and Voltaire, he flounders in helpless incompetency. He tries Scott, the writer of novels, by purely Puritan standards. Because there is in Scott no signs of soul-struggles, no conscious devotion to heroic ends, no introspective torturings, Carlyle sets himself to a process of belittling. So with Voltaire. Carlyle's failure in this sphere was due to the fact that he overdid the ethical side of criticism and became a pulpiteer; he was false to his own principle of endeavouring to seize the dominant idea. Because Scott and Voltaire were not dominated by the Covenanting idea, Carlyle dealt with them in a tone of disparagement. Carlyle admired Goethe, but he certainly made no attempt to cultivate

Goethe's catholicity. Let us not fall into Carlyle's mistake, and condemn him for qualities which were incompatible with his temperament. After all has been said, English literature stands largely indebted to Carlyle the critic.

CHAPTER IV

LIFE IN LONDON

Mrs Carlyle entered heartily into her husband's proposal to remove to London. 'Burn our ships!' she gaily said to him one day (*i.e.*, dismantle the house); 'carry all our furniture with us'; which they accordingly did. 'At sight of London,' Carlyle wrote, 'I remember humming to myself a ballad-stanza of "Johnnie o' Braidislea," which my dear old mother used to sing,

> "For there's seven foresters in yon forest;
> And them I want to see, see,
> And them I want to see (and shoot down)!"

Carlyle lodged at Ampton Street again; but presently did 'immense stretches of walking in search of houses.' He found his way to Chelsea and there secured a small old-fashioned house at 5 (now numbered 24) Cheyne Row, at a rent of £35 a year. Mrs Carlyle followed in a short time and approved of his choice. They took possession on the 10th June 1834, and Carlyle recounts the 'cheerful gipsy life' they had there 'among the litter and carpenters for three incipient days.' Leigh Hunt was in the next

street 'sending kind, *un*practical messages,' dropping in to see them in the evenings.

When in London on a former occasion, Carlyle became acquainted with John Stuart Mill, and the intimacy was kept alive by correspondence to and from Craigenputtock. It was through Mill's letters that Carlyle's thoughts were turned towards the French Revolution. When he returned to London, Mill was very useful to him, lending him a fine collection of books on that subject. Mill's evenings in Cheyne Row were 'sensibly agreeable for most part,' remarks Carlyle. 'Talk rather wintry ("sawdustish," as old Sterling once called it), but always well-informed and sincere.' Carlyle was making rapid progress with the first volume of his *French Revolution.* Stern necessity gave a spurt to his pen, for in February 1835 he notes that 'some twenty-three months' had passed since he earned a single penny by the 'craft of literature.' The volume was completed and he lent the only copy to Mill. The MS. was unfortunately burnt by a servant-maid. 'How well do I still remember,' writes Carlyle in his *Reminiscences*, 'that night when he came to tell us, pale as Hector's ghost. . . . It was like half sentence of death to us both, and we had to pretend to take it lightly, so dismal and ghastly was his horror at it, and try to talk of other matters. He stayed three mortal hours or so; his departure quite a relief to us. Oh, the burst of sympathy my poor darling then gave

me, flinging her arms round my neck, and openly lamenting, condoling, and encouraging like a nobler second self! Under heaven is nothing beautifuller. We sat talking till late; 'shall be written again,' my fixed word and resolution to her. Which proved to be such a task as I never tried before or since. I wrote out "Feast of Pikes" (Vol. II.), and then went at it. Found it fairly impossible for about a fortnight; passed three weeks (reading Marryat's novels), tried, cautious-cautiously, as on ice paper-thin, once more; and in short had a job more like breaking my heart than any other in my experience. Jeannie, alone of beings, burnt like a steady lamp beside me. I forget how much of money we still had. I think there was at first something like £300, perhaps £280, to front London with. Nor can I in the least remember where we had gathered such a sum, except that it was our own, no part of it borrowed or given us by anybody. "Fit to last till *French Revolution* is ready!" and she had no misgivings at all. Mill was penitently liberal; sent me £200 (in a day or two), of which I kept £100 (actual cost of house while I had written burnt volume); upon which he bought me "Biographie Universelle," which I got bound, and still have. Wish I could find a way of getting the now much macerated, changed, and fanaticised John Stuart Mill to take that £100 back; but I fear there is no way.' *

* *Reminiscences*, vol. ii. pp. 178-79.

Carlyle went diligently to work at the *French Revolution*. Some conviction he had that the book was worth something. Once or twice among the flood of equipages at Hyde Park Corner, when taking his afternoon stroll, he thought to himself, 'Perhaps none of you could do what I am at!' But generally his feeling was, 'I shall finish this book, throw it at your feet, buy a rifle and spade, and withdraw to the Transatlantic Wilderness, far from human beggaries and basenesses!' 'This,' he says, 'had a kind of comfort to me; yet I always knew too, in the background, that this would not practically do. In short, my nervous system had got dreadfully irritated and inflamed before I quite ended, and my desire was intense, beyond words, to have done with it.' Then he adds: 'The last paragraph I well remember writing upstairs in the drawing-room that now is, which was then my writing-room; beside her there and in a grey evening (summer, I suppose), soon after tea (perhaps); thereupon, with her dear blessing on me, going out to walk. I had said before going out, "What they will do with this book, none knows, my Jeannie, lass; but they have not had, for a two hundred years, any book that came more truly from a man's very heart, and so let them trample it under foot and hoof as they see best!" "Pooh, pooh! they cannot trample that!" she would cheerily answer; for her own approval (I think she had read always regularly behind me) especially in Vol. III., was strong and

decided.' Mrs Carlyle was right. No critic or clique of critics could trample the *French Revolution.*

A month before the completion of the first book of the *French Revolution*, Carlyle wrote in his journal: 'My first friend Edward Irving is dead. I am friendless here or as good as that.' In a week or two thereafter he met Southey, whom he describes as a 'lean, grey, white-headed man of dusky complexion, unexpectedly tall when he rises and still leaner then—the shallowest chin, prominent snubbed Roman nose, small carelined brow, huge bush of white grey hair on high crown and projecting on all sides, the most vehement pair of faint hazel eyes I have ever seen—a well-read, honest, limited (straitlaced even), kindly-hearted, most irritable man. We parted kindly, with no great purpose on either side, I imagine, to meet again.'* Later on Carlyle admits to his brother John that his prospects in London were not brightening; which fact left him gloomy and morose.

During his enforced leisure after the destruction of the first book of the *French Revolution*, Carlyle saw more of his friends, among whom he numbered John Sterling, fresh from Cambridge and newly ordained a clergyman. Sterling was of a 'vehement but most noble nature,' and he was one of the few who had studied *Sartor Resartus* seriously. He had been also caught by the Radical epidemic on the spiritual side.

* Froude's 'Life in London,' vol. i. p. 20.

Although dissenting from much of what Carlyle taught, Sterling recognised in him 'a man not only brilliantly gifted, but differing from the common run of people in this, that he would not lie, that he would not equivocate, that he would say always what he actually thought, careless whether he pleased or offended.' He introduced Carlyle to his father, who was then the 'guiding genius' of the *Times*, and who offered Carlyle work there on the usual conditions. 'Carlyle,' says Froude, 'though with poverty at his door, and entire penury visible in the near future, turned away from a proposal which might have tempted men who had less excuse for yielding to it. He was already the sworn soldier of another chief. His allegiance from first to last was to *truth*, truth as it presented itself to his own intellect and his own conscience.'

On the 16th of February 1835 Carlyle wrote to his brother John: 'I positively do not care that periodical literature shuts her fist against me in these months. Let her keep it shut for ever, and go to the devil, which she mostly belongs to. The matter had better be brought to a crisis. There is perhaps a finger of Providence in it. . . . My only new scheme, since last letter, is a hypothesis—little more yet—about National Education. The newspapers had an advertisement about a Glasgow "Educational Association" which wants a man that would found a Normal School, first going over England and into Germany to get light on

that matter. I wrote to that Glasgow Association afar off, enquiring who they were, what manner of man they expected, testifying myself very friendly to their project, and so forth—no answer as yet. It is likely they will want, as Jane says, a "Chalmers and Welsh" kind of character, in which case *Va ben, felice notte.* If otherwise, and they (almost by miracle) had the heart, I am the man for them. Perhaps my name is so heterodox in that circle, I shall not hear at all.'* Carlyle also remarks, in the same letter, that John Stuart Mill is very friendly: 'He is the nearest approach to a real man that I find here—nay, as far as negativeness goes, he *is* that man, but unhappily not very satisfactory much farther.'

Not long thereafter Carlyle met Wordsworth. 'I did not expect much,' he said in a letter, 'but got mostly what I expected. The old man has a fine shrewdness and naturalness in his expression of face, a long Cumberland figure; one finds also a kind of *sincerity* in his speech. But for prolixity, thinness, endless dilution, it excels all the other speech I had heard from mortals. A genuine man, which is much, but also essentially a small, genuine man.'

Early in October 1835 Carlyle started for his old home. His mother-in-law had arrived on a visit at Cheyne Row, and remained there with her daughter during Carlyle's absence in Scotland. He returned

* Froude's 'Life in London,' vol. i. p. 24.

improved in health and spirits. Nothing came of the National Education scheme. Carlyle was not a person to push himself into notice, remarks Froude; and his friends did not exert themselves for him, or they tried and failed; 'governments, in fact, do not look out for servants among men who are speculating about the nature of the Universe. Then, as always, the doors leading into regular employment remained closed.' Shortly after his return from the North, he was offered the editorship of a newspaper at Lichfield. This was unaccepted for the same reason that weighed with him when he refused a post on the *Times*. In the following summer money matters had become so pressing that Carlyle wrote the article on Mirabeau, now printed among the *Miscellanies*, for Mill's review, which brought him £50. Mrs Carlyle's health began to suffer, and a visit to Annandale became imperative. She returned 'mended in spirits.' Writing of her arrival in London, she said: 'I had my luggage put on the backs of two porters, and walked on to Cheapside, when I presently found a Chelsea omnibus. By-and-bye the omnibus stopped, and amid cries of "No room, sir; can't get in," Carlyle's face, beautifully set off by a broad-brimmed white hat, gazed in at the door like the peri "who, at the gate of heaven, stood disconsolate." In hurrying along the Strand, his eye had lighted on my trunk packed on the top of the omnibus, and had recognised it. This seems to me one of the

most indubitable proofs of genius which he ever manifested.'

On the 22nd of January 1837 Carlyle wrote to his mother: 'The book [*French Revolution*] is actually done; all written to the last line; and now, after much higgling and maffling, the printers have got fairly afloat, and we are to go on with the wind and the sea.' But no money could be expected from the book for a considerable time. Meanwhile, Miss Harriet Martineau (who had introduced herself into Cheyne Row), and Miss Wilson, another accomplished friend, thought that Carlyle should begin a course of lectures in London, and thereby raise a little money. Carlyle, it seems, gave 'a grumbling consent.' Nothing daunted, the ladies found two hundred persons ready each to subscribe a guinea to hear a course of lectures from him. The end of it was that he delivered six discourses on German literature, which were 'excellent in themselves, and delivered with strange impressiveness,' and £135 went into his purse.

In the summer the *French Revolution* appeared. The sale at first was slow, almost nothing, for it was not 'subscribed for' among the booksellers. Alluding to the criticisms which appeared, Carlyle said: 'Some condemn me, as is very natural, for affectation; others are hearty, even passionate, in their estimation; on the whole, it strikes me as not unlikely that the book may take some hold of the English people, and do them

and itself a little good.' He was right. Other historians have described the Revolution: Carlyle reproduces the Revolution. He approaches history like a dramatist. Give him, as in the French Revolution, a weird, tragic, awe-inspiring theme, and he will utilise his characters, scenes, and circumstances in artistic subordination to the central idea. Carlyle might be called a subjective dramatist—that is to say, his own spirit, thoughts, and reflections get so mixed up with the history that it is difficult to imagine the one without the other. Every now and then the dramatist interrupts the tragedy to interject his own reflections; in the history the Carlylean philosophy plays the part of a Greek chorus. As an example of Carlyle's genius for a dramatic situation, take his opening of the great drama with the death scene of Louis XV. Who does not feel, in reading that scene, as if the Furies were not far off? who does not detect in the grotesque jostling of the comedy and tragedy of life premonitions of the coming storm?

'But figure his thought, when Death is now clutching at his own heart-strings; unlooked for, inexorable! Yes, poor Louis, Death has found thee. No palace walls or lifeguards, gorgeous tapestries or gilt buckram of stiffest ceremonial could keep him out; but he is here, here at thy very life-breath, and will extinguish it. Thou, whose whole existence hitherto was a chimera and scenic show, at length becomest a reality; sumptuous

Versailles bursts asunder, like a dream, into void Immensity: Time is done, and all the scaffolding of Time falls wrecked with hideous clangour round thy soul: the pale Kingdoms yawn open; there must thou enter, naked, all unking'd, and await what is appointed thee! . . . . There are nods and sagacious glances, go-betweens, silk dowagers mysteriously gliding, with smiles for this constellation, sighs for that: there is tremor, of hope or desperation, in several hearts. There is the pale, grinning Shadow of Death, ceremoniously ushered along by another grinning Shadow, of Etiquette; at intervals the growl of Chapel Organs, like prayer by machinery; proclaiming, as in a kind of horrid diabolic horse-laughter, *Vanity of vanities, all is Vanity!*'

At every stage in the narrative, the reader is impressed with the dramatic texture of Carlyle's mind. No dramatic writer surpasses him in the art of producing effects by contrasts. In the midst of a vigorous description of the storming of the Bastille, he rings down the curtain for a moment in order to introduce the following scene of idyllic beauty: 'O evening sun of July, how, at this hour, thy beams fall slant on reapers amid peaceful woody fields; on old women spinning in cottages; on ships far out in the silent main; on Balls at the Orangerie of Versailles, where high-rouged Dames of the Palace are even now dancing with double-jacketed Hussar officers;—and

also on this roaring Hell-porch of a Hotel-de-Ville!'

Equally effective is Carlyle in rendering vivid the doings of the individual actors in the drama. For photographic minuteness and startling realism what can equal the following:—'But see Camille Desmoulins, from the Café de Foy, rushing out, sibylline in face; his hair streaming, in each hand a pistol! He springs to a table: the police satellites are eyeing him; alive they shall not take him, not they alive him alive. This time he speaks without stammering:—Friends! shall we die like hunted hares? Like sheep hounded into their pinfold; bleating for mercy, where is no mercy, but only a whetted knife? The hour is come, the supreme hour of Frenchman and Man; when Oppressors are to try conclusions with Oppressed; and the word is, swift Death, or Deliverance forever. Let such hour be *well*-come! Us, meseems, one cry only befits: To Arms! Let universal Paris, universal France, as with the throat of the whirlwind, sound only: To arms!—"To arms!" yell responsive the innumerable voices; like one great voice, as of a Demon yelling from the air: for all faces wax fire-eyed, all hearts burn up into madness. In such, or fitter words does Camille evoke the Elemental Powers, in this great moment—"Friends," continues Camille, "some rallying-sign! Cockades; green ones—the colour of Hope!"—As with the flight of locusts,

these green tree-leaves; green ribands from the neighbouring shops: all green things are snatched, and made cockades of. Camille descends from his table; "stifled with embraces, wetted with tears;" has a bit of green riband handed him; sticks it in his hat. And now to Curtius' Image-shop there; to the Boulevards; to the four winds, and rest not till France be on fire!'

As a historical work, the *French Revolution* is unique. It is precisely the kind of book Isaiah would have written had there been a like Revolution in the Jewish kingdom; and just as we go to Isaiah, not for sociological guidance, but for ethical inspiration, so we turn to the *French Revolution* when the mind and heart are in a state of torpor in order to get a series of shocks from the Carlylean electric battery. From a historian a student expects light as well as heat, guidance as well as inspiration. It is not enough to have the great French explosion vividly photographed before his eyes; it is equally necessary to know the causes which led to the catastrophe. Here, as a historian, Carlyle is conspicuously weak. His habit of looking for dramatic situations, his passion for making commonplace incidents and commonplace men merely the satellites of commanding personalities, in a word, his theory that history should deal with the doings of great men, prevents Carlyle from dwelling upon the politico-economic side of national life. So absorbed is he in painting the Revolution, that he forgets to explain

the Revolution. We have abundance of vague declamations against shams in high places, plenty of talk about God's judgments, in the style of the Hebrew prophets, but of patient diagnosis, there is none. As Mr Morley puts it in his luminous essay on Carlyle: 'To the question whether mankind gained or lost by the French Revolution, Carlyle nowhere gives a clear answer; indeed, on this subject more than any other, he clings closely to his favourite method of simple presentation, streaked with dramatic irony. . . . . He draws its general moral lesson from the Revolution, and with clangorous note warns all whom it concerns from King to Church that imposture must come to an end. But for the precise amount and kind of dissolution which the West owes to it, for the political meaning of it, as distinguished from its moral or its dramatic significance, we seek in vain, finding no word on the subject, nor even evidence of consciousness that such word is needed.' Had Carlyle, in addition to his genius as a historical dramatist, possessed the patient diagnosing power of the writers and thinkers whom he derided, his *French Revolution* would have taken its place in historical literature as an epoch-making book. As it stands, the reader who desires to have an intelligible knowledge of the subject, is compelled to shake himself free of the Carlylean mesmerism, and have recourse to those writers whom Carlyle, under the opprobious names of 'logic-choppers' and 'dry-as-dusts,' held up to public ridicule.

CHAPTER V

HOLIDAY JOURNEYINGS—LITERARY WORK

CARLYLE was so broken down with his efforts upon the *French Revolution* that a trip to Annandale became necessary. He stayed at Scotsbrig two months, 'wholly idle, reading novels, smoking pipes in the garden with his mother, hearing notices of his book from a distance, but not looking for them or caring about them.' Autumn brought Carlyle back to Cheyne Row, when he found his wife in better health, delighted to have him again at her side. She knew, as Froude points out, though Carlyle, so little vain was he, had failed as yet to understand it, that he had returned to a changed position, that he was no longer lonely and neglected, but had taken his natural place among the great writers of his day. He sent bright accounts of himself to Scotsbrig. 'I find John Sterling here, and many friends, all kinder each than the other to me. With talk and locomotion the days pass cheerfully till I rest and gird myself together again. They make a great talk about the book, which seems to have succeeded in a far higher degree than I looked

for. Everybody is astonished at every other body's being pleased with this wonderful performance.' *

Carlyle did nothing all the winter except to write his essay on Sir Walter Scott. His next task was to prepare for a second course of lectures in the spring on 'Heroes.' The course ended with 'a blaze of fireworks—people weeping at the passionately earnest tone in which for once they heard themselves addressed.' The effort brought Carlyle £300 after all expenses had been paid. 'A great blessing,' he remarked, 'to a man that had been haunted by the squalid spectre of beggary.'

Carlyle had no intention of visiting Scotland that autumn, but having received a pressing invitation from old friends at Kirkcaldy, he took steamer to Leith in August. While at Kirkcaldy he crossed to Edinburgh and called on Jeffrey. 'He sat,' says Carlyle, 'waiting for me at Moray Place. We talked long in the style of literary and philosophic clitter-clatter. Finally it was settled that I should go out to dinner with him at Craigcrook, and not return to Fife till the morrow.' They dined and abstained from contradicting each other, Carlyle admitting that Jeffrey was becoming an amiable old fribble, 'very cheerful, very heartless, very forgettable and tolerable.'

On his return to London, equal to work again, Carlyle found all well. He was gratified to hear that

* Froude's 'Life in London,' vol. i. p. 115.

the eighth edition of the *French Revolution* was almost sold, and that another would be called for, while there were numerous applications from review editors for articles if he would please to supply them. Mill about this time asked him to contribute a paper on Cromwell to the *London and Westminster Review*. Carlyle agreed, and was preparing to begin when the negotiations were broken off. Mill had gone abroad, leaving a Mr Robertson to manage the *Review*. Robertson coolly wrote to say that he need not go on with the article, 'for he meant to do Cromwell himself.' Carlyle was wroth, and that incident determined him to 'throw himself seriously into the history of the Commonwealth, and to expose himself no more to cavalier treatment from "able editors."' But for that task he required books. Then it was that the idea of founding a London library occurred to him. Men of position took up the matter warmly, and Carlyle's object was accomplished. 'Let the tens of thousands,' says Mr Froude, 'who, it is to be hoped, "are made better and wiser" by the books collected there, remember that they owe the privilege entirely to Carlyle.'

One of Carlyle's new acquaintances was Monckton Milnes, who asked him to breakfast. Carlyle used to say that if Christ were again on earth Milnes would ask Him to breakfast, and the clubs would all be talking of the 'good things' that Christ had said. He also became familiar with Mr Baring, afterwards Lord Ash-

burton, and his accomplished wife, who in course of time exercised a disturbing influence over the Carlyle household. It would not tend to edification to dwell upon the domestic misunderstandings at Cheyne Row; besides, are not they to be found detailed at great length in Froude's *Life*, the *Reminiscences*, and *Letters and Memorials?* Although Carlyle was taking life somewhat easy, he was making preparations for his third course of lectures, his subject being the 'Revolutions of Modern Europe.' They did not please the lecturer, but the audiences were as enthusiastic as ever, and he made a clear gain of £200.

About this time Emerson was pressing him to go to Boston on a lecturing tour. But Carlyle thought better of it. More important work awaited him in London. 'All his life,' says Froude, 'he had been meditating on the problem of the working-man's existence in this country at the present epoch. . . . . He had seen the Glasgow riots in 1819. He had heard his father talk of the poor masons, dining silently upon water and water-cresses. His letters are full of reflections on such things, sad or indignant, as the humour might be. He was himself a working-man's son. He had been bred in a peasant home, and all his sympathies were with his own class. He was not a revolutionist; he knew well that violence would be no remedy; that there lay only madness and deeper misery. But the fact remained, portending frightful

issues. The Reform Bill was to have mended matters but the Reform Bill had gone by and the poor were none the happier. The power of the State had been shifted from the aristocracy to the mill-owners, and merchants, and shopkeepers. That was all. The handicraftsman remained where he was, or was sinking, rather, into an unowned Arab, to whom "freedom" meant freedom to work if the employer had work to offer him conveniently to himself, or else freedom to starve. The fruit of such a state of society as this was the Sansculottism on which he had been lecturing, and he felt that he must put his thoughts upon it in a permanent form. He had no faith in political remedies, in extended suffrages, recognition of "the rights of man," etc.—absolutely none. That was the road on which the French had gone; and, if tried in England, it would end as it ended with them—in anarchy, and hunger, and fury. The root of the mischief was the forgetfulness on the part of the upper classes, increasing now to flat denial, that they owed any duty to those under them beyond the payment of contract wages at the market price. The Liberal theory, as formulated in Political Economy, was that every one should attend exclusively to his own interests, and that the best of all possible worlds would be the certain result. His own conviction was that the result would be the worst of all possible worlds, a world in which

human life, such a life as *human* beings ought to live, would become impossible.' *

He wrote to his brother when his lectures were over: 'Guess what immediate project I am on; that of writing an article on the working-classes for the "Quarterly." It is verily so. I offered to do the thing for Mill about a year ago. He durst not. I felt a kind of call and monition of duty to do it, wrote to Lockhart accordingly, was altogether invitingly answered, had a long interview with the man yesterday, found him a person of sense, good-breeding, even kindness, and great consentaneity of opinion with myself on the matter. Am to get books from him to-morrow, and so shall forthwith set about telling the Conservatives a thing or two about the claims, condition, rights, and mights of the working order of men.'

When the annual exodus from London came, the Carlyles went north for a holiday. They returned much refreshed at the end of two months. His presence, moreover, was required in London, as *Wilhelm Meister* was now to be republished. He set about finishing his article for the "Quarterly," but as he progressed he felt some misgiving as to its ever appearing in that magazine. 'I have finished,' he wrote on November 8, 1839, 'a long review article, thick pamphlet, or little volume, entitled "Chartism." Lockhart has it, for it was partly promised to him; at least

* Froude's 'Life in London,' vol. i. pp. 161-62.

the refusal of it was, and that, I conjecture, will be all he will enjoy of it.' Lockhart sent it back, 'seemingly not without reluctance,' saying he dared not. Mill was shown the pamphlet and was 'unexpectedly delighted with it.' He was willing to publish it, but Carlyle's wife and brother insisted that the thing was too good for a magazine article. Fraser undertook to print it, and before the close of the year *Chartism* was in the hands of the public.

The sale was rapid, an edition of a thousand copies being sold immediately. 'Chartism,' Froude narrates, was loudly noticed: "considerable reviewing, but very daft reviewing." Men wondered; how could they choose but wonder, when a writer of evident power stripped bare the social disease, told them that their remedies were quack remedies, and their progress was progress to dissolution? The Liberal journals, finding their "formulas" disbelieved in, clamoured that Carlyle was unorthodox; no Radical, but a wolf in sheep's clothing. Yet what he said was true, and could not be denied to be true. "They approve generally," he said, "but regret very much that I am a Tory. Stranger Tory, in my opinion, has not been fallen in with in these later generations." Again a few weeks later (February 11): "The people are beginning to discover that I am not a Tory. Ah, no! but one of the deepest, though perhaps the quietest, of all the Radicals now extant in the world—a thing productive

of small comfort to several persons. They have said, and they will say, and let them say."

His final course of lectures now confronted him, and these he entitled *Heroes and Hero Worship*. He tells his mother (May 26, 1840): 'The lecturing business went off with sufficient *éclat*. The course was generally judged, and I rather join therein myself, to be the bad *best* I have yet given. On the last day—Friday last—I went to speak of Cromwell with a head *full of air*; you know that wretched physical feeling; I had been concerned with drugs, had awakened at five, etc. It is absolute martyrdom. My tongue would hardly wag at all when I got done. Yet the good people sate breathless, or broke out into all kinds of testimonies of goodwill. . . . In a word, we got right handsomely through.' That was Carlyle's last appearance as a public lecturer. He was now the observed of all observers in London society; but he was weary of lionising and junketings. 'What,' he notes in his journal on June 15, 1840, 'are lords coming to call on one and fill one's head with whims? They ask you to go among champagne, bright glitter, semi-poisonous excitements which you do not like even for the moment, and you are sick for a week after. As old Tom White said of whisky, "Keep it—Deevil a ever I'se better than when there's no a drop on't i' my weam." So say I of dinner popularity, lords and lionism—Keep it; give it to those that like it.'

Carlyle was much refreshed at this period by visits from Tennyson. Here is what he says of the poet: 'A fine, large-featured, dim-eyed, bronze-coloured, shaggy-headed man is Alfred; dusty, smoky, free and easy, who swims outwardly and inwardly with great composure in an inarticulate element of tranquil chaos and tobacco smoke. Great now and then when he does emerge—a most restful, brotherly, solid-hearted man."

In a note to his brother John on September 11, 1840, he says: 'I have again some notions towards writing a book—let us see what comes of that. It is the one use of living, for me. Enough to-day.' The book he had in view was *Cromwell.* Journalising on the day after Christmas he laments—'Oliver Cromwell will not prosper with me at all. I began reading about that subject some four months ago. I learn almost nothing by reading, yet cannot as yet heartily begin to write. Nothing on paper yet. I know not where to begin.'

At the end of the year Mrs Carlyle wrote: 'Carlyle is reading voraciously, preparatory to writing a new book. For the rest, he growls away much in the old style. But one gets to feel a certain indifference to his growling; if one did not, it would be the worse for one.' A month or two later, Carlyle writes: 'Think not hardly of me, dear Jeannie. In the mutual misery we often are in, we do not know how dear we are to one another. By the help of Heaven, I shall get a little

better, and somewhat of it shall abate. Last night, at dinner, Richard Milnes made them all laugh with a saying of yours. "When the wife has influenza, it is *a slight cold*—when the man has it, it is, &c., &c."' Writing to Sterling he exclaims, 'I shall verily fly to Craigenputtock again before long. Yet I know what solitude is, and imprisonment among black cattle and peat bogs. The truth is, we are never right as we are. "Oh, the devil burn it"! said the Irish drummer flogging his countryman; "there's no pleasing of you, strike where one will."'

Milnes prevailed on Carlyle, instead of flying to the bleak expanse of Craigenputtock, to accompany him to his father's house at Fryston, in Yorkshire, whence he sent a series of affectionate and graphic letters to Mrs Carlyle. Being so far north, he took a run to Dumfriesshire to see his mother, who had been slightly ailing. He was back in London, however, in May, but not improved in mind or body. It was a hot summer, and the Carlyles went to Scotsbrig, and took a cottage at Newby, close to Annan. By the end of September, Carlyle was back in Cheyne Row. His latest hero still troubled him. 'Ought I,' he asks, 'to write now of Oliver Cromwell? . . . I cannot yet see clearly.'

Carlyle at one time had a hankering after a Scottish professorship, but the 'door had been shut in his face,' sometimes contemptuously. He was now famous, and

the young Edinburgh students, having looked into his lectures on Heroes, began to think that, whatever might be the opinions of the authorities and patrons, they for their part must consider lectures such as these a good exchange for what was provided for them. A 'History Chair' was about to be established. A party of them, represented by a Mr Dunipace, presented a requisition to the Faculty of Advocates to appoint Carlyle. When asked his consent to be nominated, Carlyle replied: 'Accept my kind thanks, you and all your associates, for your zeal to serve me. . . . Ten years ago such an invitation might perhaps have been decisive of much for me, but it is too late now; too late for many reasons, which I need not trouble you with at present.'

A very severe blow now fell upon Mrs Carlyle, who received news from Templand that her mother had been struck by apoplexy, and was dangerously ill. Although unfit for travelling, she caught the first train from Euston Square to Liverpool, but at her uncle's house there she learnt that all was over. Mrs Carlyle lay ill in Liverpool, unable to stir. After a while she was able to go back to London, where Carlyle joined her in the month of May. It was on his return journey that he paid a visit to Dr Arnold at Rugby, when he had an opportunity, under his host's genial guidance, to explore the field of Naseby.

His sad occupations in Scotland, and the sad thoughts

they suggested, made Carlyle disinclined for society. He had a room arranged for him at the top of his house, and there he sate and smoked, and read books on Cromwell, 'the sight of Naseby having brought the subject back out of "the abysses."' Meanwhile he had a pleasant trip to Ostend with Mr Stephen Spring Rice, Commissioner of Customs, of which he wrote vivid descriptions.

On October 25, 1842, Carlyle wrote in his journal: 'For many months there has been no writing here. Alas! what was there to write? About myself, nothing; or less, if that was possible. I have not got one word to stand upon paper in regard to Oliver. The beginnings of work are even more formidable than the executing of it.' But another subject was to engross his attention for a little while. The distress of the poor became intense; less in London, however, than in other large towns. 'I declare,' he wrote to his mother early in January 1843, 'I declare I begin to feel as if I should not hold my peace any longer, as if I should perhaps open my mouth in a way that some of them are not expecting—we shall see if this book were done.' On the 20th he wrote: 'I hope it will be a rather useful kind of book.' He could not go on with Cromwell till he had unburdened his soul. 'The look of the world,' he said, 'is really quite oppressive to me. Eleven thousand souls in Paisley alone living on threehalfpence a day, and the governors of the land

all busy shooting partridges and passing corn-laws the while! It is a thing no man with a speaking tongue in his head is entitled to be silent about.' The outcome of all his soul-burnings and cogitations was *Past and Present*, which appeared at the beginning of April. The reviewers set to work, 'wondering, admiring, blaming, chiefly the last.'

Carlyle then undertook several journeys, chiefly in order to visit Cromwellian battlefields, the sight of which made the Oliver enterprise no longer impossible. He found a renovated house on his return, and Mrs Carlyle writing on November 28th, describes him as 'over head and ears in Cromwell,' and 'lost to humanity for the time being.' Six months later, he makes this admission in his journal—'My progress in "Cromwell" is frightful. I am no day absolutely idle, but the confusions that lie in my way require far more fire of energy than I can muster on most days, and I sit not so much working as painfully looking on work.' Four months later, when *Cromwell* was progressing slowly, Carlyle suffered a severe personal loss by the death of John Sterling. 'Sterling,' says Froude, 'had been his spiritual pupil, his first, and also his noblest and best. Consumption had set its fatal mark upon him.' Carlyle drowned his sorrow in hard work, and in July 1845 the end of *Cromwell* was coming definitely in sight. In his journal under date August 26th, is to be found this entry: 'I have this moment *ended* Oliver; hang it! He is ended,

thrums and all. I have nothing more to write on the subject, only mountains of wreck to burn. Not (any more) up to the chin in paper clippings and chaotic litter, hatefuller to me than most. I *am* to have a swept floor now again.' And thus the herculean labours of five years were ended. His desire was to be in Scotland, and he made his way northwards by the usual sea route to Annan and Scotsbrig. He did not remain long away, and upon his return *Cromwell* was just issuing from the press. It was received with great favour, the sale was rapid, and additional materials came from unexpected quarters. In February 1846 a new edition was needed in order to insert fresh letters of Oliver according to date; a process, Carlyle said 'requiring one's most excellent talent, as of shoe-cobbling, really that kind of talent carried to a high pitch.' When completed, Carlyle presented a copy of it to the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, a step he never took before or after with any of his writings,—a compliment which Peel gracefully acknowledged.

Carlyle's plans for the summer of 1846 were, a visit to his mother and a run across to Ireland. Charles Gavan Duffy of the *Nation* newspaper saw him in London in consequence of what he had written in *Chartism* about misgovernment in Ireland. He had promised to go over and see what the 'Young Ireland' movement was doing. On the 31st of August he left Scotsbrig, and landed in due course at Belfast, where

he was to have been met by John Mitchel and Gavan Duffy and driven to Drogheda. He missed his two friends through a mistake at the post-office, and hurried on by railway to Dublin. He met them at Dundrum, and was there entertained at a large dinner-party. Next day he dined at Mitchel's. His stay was remarkably short. He took steamer at Kingstown, and in the early morning of September 10th 'he was sitting smoking a cigar before the door of his wife's uncle's house in Liverpool till the household should awake and let him in.'

In June 1847 Carlyle relates that they had a flying visit from Jeffrey. 'A much more interesting visitor than Jeffrey was old Dr Chalmers, who came down to us also last week, whom I had not seen before for, I think, five-and-twenty years. It was a pathetic meeting. The good old man is grown white-headed, but is otherwise wonderfully little altered—grave, deliberate, very gentle in his deportment, but with plenty too of soft energy; full of interest still for all serious things, full of real kindliness, and sensible even to honest mirth in a fair measure. He sate with us an hour and a half, went away with our blessings and affections. It is long since I have spoken to so *good* and really pious-hearted and beautiful old man.' In a week or two Chalmers was suddenly called away. 'I believe,' wrote Carlyle to his mother, 'there is not in all Scotland, or all Europe, any such Christian priest left. It will long be memorable to us, the little visit we had from him.'

Early in 1848, the Jew Bill was before Parliament, and the fate of it doubtful, narrates Mr Froude. Baron Rothschild wrote to ask Carlyle to write a pamphlet in its favour, and intimated that he might name any sum which he liked to ask as payment. Froude enquired how he answered. 'Well,' he said, 'I had to tell him it couldn't be; but I observed, too, that I could not conceive why he and his friends, who were supposed to be looking out for the coming of Shiloh, should be seeking seats in a Gentile legislature.' Froude asked what the Baron said to that. 'Why,' said Carlyle, 'he seemed to think the coming of Shiloh was a dubious business, and that meanwhile, etc., etc.'

On February 9, 1848, Carlyle wrote in his journal: 'Chapman's money [Chapman & Hall were his publishers] all paid, lodged now in the Dumfries Bank. New edition of "Sartor" to be wanted soon. My poor books of late have yielded me a certain fluctuating annual income; at all events, I am quite at my ease as to money, and that on such low terms. I often wonder at the luxurious ways of the age. Some £1500, I think, is what has accumulated in the bank. Of fixed income (from Craigenputtock) £150 a year. Perhaps as much from my books may lie fixed amid the huge fluctuation (last year, for instance, it was £800: the year before, £100; the year before that, about £700; this year, again, it is like to be £100; the next perhaps nothing—very fluctuating indeed)—

some £300 in all, and that amply suffices me. For my wife is the best of housewives; noble, too, in reference to the property, which is *hers*, which she has never once in the most distant way seemed to know to be hers. Be this noted and remembered; my thrifty little lady—every inch a lady—ah me! In short, I authentically feel indifferent to money; would not go this way or that to gain more money.' *

The Revolution of February 24th at Paris surprised Carlyle less than most of his contemporaries, as it confirmed what he had been saying for years. He did not believe, we are told, in immediate convulsion in England; but he did believe that, unless England took warning and mended her ways, her turn would come. The excitement in London was intense, and leading men expressed themselves freely, but Carlyle's general thoughts were uttered in a lengthy letter to Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, for whom he entertained a warm regard. On March 14 he met Macaulay at Lord Mahon's at breakfast; 'Niagara of eloquent commonplace talk,' he says, 'from Macaulay. "Very good-natured man"; man cased in official mail of proof; stood my impatient fire-explosions with much patience, merely hissing a little steam up, and continued his Niagara—supply and demand; power ruinous to powerful himself; *im*possibility of Government doing more than keep the peace; suicidal distraction of new French

* Froude's 'Life in London,' vol. i. p. 420.

Republic, etc. Essentially irremediable, commonplace nature of the man; all that was in him now gone to the tongue; a squat, thickset, low-browed, short, grizzled little man of fifty.'

One of the few men Carlyle was anxious to see was Sir Robert Peel. He was introduced by the Barings at a dinner at Bath House. Carlyle sat next to Peel, whom he describes as 'a finely-made man of strong, not heavy, rather of elegant, stature; stands straight, head slightly thrown back, and eyelids modestly drooping; every way mild and gentle, yet with less of that fixed smile than the portraits give him. He is towards sixty, and, though not broken at all, carries, especially in his complexion, when you are *near* him, marks of that age; clear, strong blue eyes which kindle on occasion, voice extremely good, low-toned, something of *cooing* in it, rustic, affectionate, honest, mildly persuasive. Spoke about French Revolutions new and old; well read in all that; had seen General Dumouriez; reserved seemingly by nature, obtrudes nothing of *diplomatic* reserve. On the contrary, a vein of mild *fun* in him, real sensibility to the ludicrous, which feature I liked best of all. . . . . I consider him by far our first public man—which, indeed, is saying little—and hope that England in these frightful times may still get some good of him. N.B.—This night with Peel was the night in which Berlin city executed its last terrible battle, (19th of March to

Sunday morning the 20th, five o'clock.) While we sate there the streets of Berlin city were all blazing with grape-shot and the war of enraged men. What is to become of all that? I have a book to write about it. Alas!" We hear of a great Chartist petition to be presented by 200,000 men. People here keep up their foolish levity in speaking of these things; but considerate persons find them to be very grave; and indeed all, even the laughers, are in considerable secret alarm.' *

At such a time Carlyle knew that he, the author of *Chartism*, ought to say something. Foolish people, too, came pressing for his opinions. Not seeing his way to a book upon 'Democracy,' he wrote a good many newspaper articles, chiefly in the *Examiner* and the *Spectator*, to deliver his soul. Even Fonblanque and Rintoul (the editors), remarks Froude, friendly though they were to him, could not allow him his full swing. 'There is no established journal,' complained Carlyle, 'that can stand my articles, no single one they would not blow the bottom out of.'

On July 12 occurs this entry in his journal: 'Chartist concern, and Irish Repeal concern, and French Republic concern have all gone a bad way since the March entry—April 20 (immortal day already dead), day of Chartist monster petition; 200,000 special constables swore themselves in, etc., and Chartism came to nothing. Riots since, but the leaders all

* Froude's 'Life in London,' vol. i. pp. 433-4.

lodged in gaol, tried, imprisoned for two years, etc., and so ends Chartism for the present. Irish Mitchel, poor fellow! is now in Bermuda as a felon; letter from him, letter to him, letter to and from Lord Clarendon —was really sorry for poor Mitchel. But what help? French Republic *cannonaded* by General Cavaignac; a sad outlook there.' *

Carlyle's *Cromwell* had created a set of enthusiastic admirers who were bent on having a statue of the great Protector set up. Carlyle was asked to give his sanction to the proposal. Writing to his mother, he said: 'The people having subscribed £25,000 for a memorial to an ugly bullock of a Hudson, who did not even pretend to have any merit except that of being suddenly rich, and who is now discovered to be little other than at heart a horse-coper and dishonest fellow, I think they ought to leave Cromwell alone of their memorials, and try to honour him in some more profitable way—by learning to be honest men like him, for example. But we shall see what comes of all this Cromwell work—a thing not without value either.' †

'Ireland,' says Froude, 'of all the topics on which Carlyle had meditated writing, remained painfully fascinating. He had looked at the beggarly scene, he had seen the blighted fields, the ragged misery of the wretched race who were suffering for other's sins as

* Froude's 'Life in London,' vol. i. p. 441.

† Ibid., vol. i. p. 451.

well as for their own. Since that brief visit of his, the famine had been followed by the famine-fever, and the flight of millions from a land which was smitten with a curse. Those ardent young men with whom he had dined at Dundrum were working as felons in the docks at Bermuda. Gavan Duffy, after a near escape from the same fate, had been a guest in Cheyne Row; and the story which he had to tell of cabins torn down by crowbars, and shivering families, turned out of their miserable homes, dying in the ditches by the roadside, had touched Carlyle to the very heart. He was furious at the economical commonplaces with which England was consoling itself. He regarded Ireland as "the breaking-point of the huge suppuration which all British and all European society then was.'" * Carlyle paid a second visit to Ireland. He was anxious to write a book on the subject. He noted down what he had seen, and 'then dismissed the unhappy subject from his mind,' giving his manuscript to a friend, which was published after his death.

The 7th of August found Carlyle among his 'ain folk' at Scotsbrig, and this was his soliloquy: 'Thank Heaven for the sight of real human industry, with human fruits from it, once more. The sight of fenced fields, weeded crops, and human creatures with whole clothes on their back—it was as if one had got into spring water out of dunghill puddles.' Mrs Carlyle

* Froude's 'Life in London,' vol. i. p. 456.

had also gone to Scotland, and 'wandered like a returned spirit about the home of her childhood.' Of her numerous lively letters, room must be found for a characteristic epistle to her brother-in-law, John Carlyle. His translation of Dante's *Inferno* was just out, and her uncle's family at Auchtertool Manse, in Fife, where she was staying, were busy reading and discussing it. 'We had been talking about you,' she says, 'and had sunk silent. Suddenly my uncle turned his head to me and said, shaking it gravely, "He has made an awesome plooster o' that place." "Who? What place, uncle?" "Whew! the place ye'll maybe gang to, if ye dinna tak' care." I really believe he considers all those circles of your invention. Walter [a cousin, just ordained] performed the marriage service over a couple of colliers the day after I came. I happened to be in his study when they came in, and asked leave to remain. The man was a good-looking man enough, dreadfully agitated, partly with the business he was come on, partly with drink. He had evidently taken a glass too much to keep his heart up. The girl had one very large inflamed eye and one little one, which looked perfectly composed, while the large eye stared wildly, and had a tear in it. Walter married them very well indeed; and his affecting words, together with the bridegroom's pale, excited face, and the bride's ugliness, and the poverty, penury, and want imprinted on the whole business, and above all fellow-

feeling with the poor wretches then rushing on their fate—all that so overcame me that I fell crying as desperately as if I had been getting married to the collier myself, and, when the ceremony was over, extended my hand to the unfortunates, and actually (in such an enthusiasm of pity did I find myself) I presented the new husband with a snuff-box which I happened to have in my hand, being just about presenting it to Walter when the creatures came in. This unexpected *Himmelsendung* finished turning the man's head; he wrung my hand over and over, leaving his mark for some hours after, and ended his grateful speeches with, "Oh, Miss! Oh, Liddy! may ye hae mair comfort and pleasure in your life than ever you have had yet!" which might easily be.'

Carlyle was full of wrath at what he considered the cant about the condition of the wage-earners in Manchester and elsewhere, and his indignation found vent in the *Latter-day Pamphlets*. Froude once asked him if he had ever thought of going into Parliament, for the former knew that the opportunity must have been offered him. 'Well,' he said, 'I did think of it at the time of the "Latter-day Pamphlets." I felt that nothing could prevent me from getting up in the House and saying all that.' 'He was powerful,' adds Froude, 'but he was not powerful *enough* to have discharged with his single voice the vast volume of conventional electricity with which the

collective wisdom of the nation was, and remains charged. It is better that his thoughts should have been committed to enduring print, where they remain to be reviewed hereafter by the light of fact.' *

The printing of the *Pamphlets* commenced at the beginning of 1850, and went on month after month, each separately published, no magazine daring to become responsible for them. When the *Pamphlets* appeared, they were received with 'astonished indignation.' 'Carlyle taken to whisky,' was the popular impression—or perhaps he had gone mad. '*Punch*,' says Froude, 'the most friendly to him of all the London periodicals, protested affectionately. The delinquent was brought up for trial before him, I think for injuring his reputation. He was admonished, but stood impenitent, and even "called the worthy magistrate a windbag and a sham." I suppose it was Thackeray who wrote this; or some other kind friend, who feared, like Emerson, "that the world would turn its back on him." He was under no illusion himself as to the effect which he was producing.' †

Amid the general storm, Carlyle was 'agreeably surprised' to receive an invitation to dine with Peel at Whitehall Gardens, where he met a select company. 'After all the servants but the butler were gone,' narrates Carlyle, 'we began to hear a little of Peel's

* Froude's 'Life in London,' vol. ii. p. 26.

† Ibid., vol. ii. p. 36.

quiet talk across the table, unimportant, distinguished by its sense of the ludicrous shining through a strong official *rationality* and even seriousness of temper. Distracted *address* of a letter from somebody to Queen Victoria; "The most noble George Victoria, Queen of England, Knight and Baronet," or something like that. A man had once written to Peel himself, while secretary, "that he was weary of life, that if any gentleman wanted for his park-woods a hermit, he, etc.", all of which was very pretty and human as Peel gave it us.' * Carlyle was driven home by the Bishop of Oxford, 'Soapy Sam' Wilberforce, whom he had probably met before at the Ashburton's. The Bishop once told Froude that he considered Carlyle a most eminently religious man. 'Ah, Sam,' said Carlyle to Froude one day, 'he is a very clever fellow; I do not hate him near as much as I fear I ought to do.' Carlyle and Peel met once more, at Bath House, and there, too, he was first introduced to the Duke of Wellington. Writing at the time, Carlyle said: 'I had never seen till now how beautiful, and what an expression of graceful simplicity, veracity, and nobleness there is about the old hero when you see him close at hand. . . . Except for Dr Chalmers, I have not for many years seen so beautiful an old man.'

Carlyle intended, some time or other, writing a 'Life of Sterling,' but meanwhile he accepted an invi-

* Froude's 'Life in London,' vol. ii. p. 43.

tation to visit South Wales. Thence he made his way to Scotsbrig. On the 27th September 1850, he 'parted sorrowfully with his mother.' When he reached London, the autumn quarterlies were reviewing the *Pamphlets*, and the 'shrieking tone was considerably modified.' 'A review of them,' says Froude, 'by Masson in the *North British* distinctly pleased Carlyle. A review in the *Dublin* he found "excellently serious," and conjectured that it came from some Anglican pervert or convert. It was written, I believe, by Dr Ward.'

After a few more wanderings, Carlyle set about the *Life of Sterling*, and on April 5, 1851, he informs his mother: 'I told the Doctor about "John Sterling's Life," a small, insignificant book or pamphlet I have been writing. The booksellers got it away from me the other morning, to see how much there is of it, in the first place. I know not altogether myself whether it is worth printing or not, but rather think it will be the end of it whether or not. It has cost little trouble, and need not do much ill, if it do no great amount of good.' Another visit had to be paid to Scotsbrig, where he read the "Life of Chalmers." 'An excellent Christian man,' he said. 'About as great a contrast to himself in all ways as could be found in these epochs under the same sky.'

When he got back to Cheyne Row, he took to reading the "Seven Years' War," with a view to another book. He determined to go to Germany, and on August

30, 1852, Carlyle embarked 'on board the greasy little wretch of a Leith steamer, laden to the water's edge with pig-iron and herrings.' The journey over, he set to work on 'Frederick,' but was driven almost to despair by the cock-crowing in his neighbourhood. Writing to Mrs Carlyle, he says: 'I foresee in general these cocks will require to be abolished, entirely silenced, whether we build the new room or not. I would cheerfully shoot them, and pay the price if discovered, but I have no gun, should be unsafe for hitting, and indeed seldom see the wretched animals.'

He took refuge at the Ashburton's house, the Grange, but on the 20th of December, news came that his mother was seriously ill, and could not last long. He hurried off to Scotsbrig, and reached there in time to see her once more alive. In his journal, this passage is to be found under date January 8, 1854: 'The stroke has fallen. My dear old mother is gone from me, and in the winter of the year, confusedly under darkness of weather and of mind, the stern final epoch—*epoch of old age*—is beginning to unfold itself for me. . . . . It is matter of perennial thankfulness to me, and beyond my desert in that matter very far, that I found my dear old mother still alive; able to recognise me with a faint joy; her former *self* still strangely visible there in all its lineaments, though worn to the uttermost thread.

The brave old mother and the good, whom to lose had been my fear ever since intelligence awoke in me in this world, arrived now at the final bourn. . . . . She was about 84 years of age, and could not with advantage to any side remain with us longer. Surely it was a good Power that gave us such a mother; and good though stern that took her away from amid such grief and labour by a death beautiful to one's thoughts. "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come." This they heard her muttering, and many other less frequent pious texts and passages. Amen, Amen! Sunday, December 25, 1853—a day henceforth for ever memorable to me. . . . . To live for the shorter or longer remainder of my days with the simple bravery, veracity, and piety of her that is gone: that would be a right learning from her death, and a right honouring of her memory. But alas all is yet *frozen* within me; even as it is without me at present, and I have made little or no way. God be helpful to me! I myself am very weak, confused, fatigued, entangled in poor *worldlinesses* too. Newspaper paragraphs, even as this sacred and peculiar thing, are not indifferent to me. Weak soul! and I am fifty-eight years old, and the tasks I have on hand, Frederick, &c., are most ungainly, incongruous with my mood—and the night cometh, for me too is not distant, which for her is come. I must try, I must try. Poor brother Jack! Will he do his Dante now? For him also I am

sad; and surely he has deserved gratitude in these last years from us all.'*

When he returned to London, Carlyle lived in strict seclusion, making repeated efforts at work on what he called 'the unexecutable book,' *Frederick*. In the spring of 1854, tidings reached Carlyle of the death of Professor Wilson. Between them there had never been any cordial relation, says Froude. 'They had met in Edinburgh in the old days; on Carlyle's part there had been no backwardness, and Wilson was not unconscious of Carlyle's extraordinary powers. But he had been shy of Carlyle, and Carlyle had resented it, and now this April the news came that Wilson was gone, and Carlyle had to write his epitaph. 'I knew his figure well,' wrote Carlyle in his journal on April 29; 'remember well first seeing him in Princes Street on a bright April afternoon—probably 1814—exactly forty years ago. . . . A tall ruddy figure, with plenteous blonde hair, with bright blue eyes, fixed, as if in haste towards some distant object, strode rapidly along, clearing the press to the left of us, close by the railings, near where Blackwood's shop now is. Westward he in haste; we slowly eastward. Campbell whispered me, "That is Wilson of the *Isle of Palms*," which poem I had not read, being then quite mathematical, scientific, &c., for extraneous reasons, as I now see them to have been. The broad-shouldered stately

* Froude's 'Life in London,' vol. ii. pp. 142-45.

bulk of the man struck me; his flashing eye, copious, dishevelled head of hair, and rapid, unconcerned progress, like that of a plough through stubble. I really liked him, but only from the distance, and thought no more of him. It must have been fourteen years later before I once saw his figure again, and began to have some distant straggling acquaintance of a personal kind with him. Glad could I have been to be better and more familiarly acquainted; but though I liked much in him, and he somewhat in me, it would not do. He was always very kind to me, but seemed to have a feeling I should—could—not become wholly his, in which he was right, and that on other terms he could not have me; so we let it so remain, and for many years—indeed, even after quitting Edinburgh—I had no acquaintance with him; occasionally got symptoms of his ill-humour with me—ink-spurts in *Blackwood*, read or heard of, which I, in a surly, silent manner, strove to consider *flattering* rather. . . . . So far as I can recollect, he was once in my house (Comely Bank, with a testimonial, poor fellow!), and I once in his, De Quincey, &c., a little while one afternoon.'*

On September 16, 1854, Carlyle breaks out in his journal: '"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."' What a fearful word! I cannot find how to take up that miserable "Frederick,"

*_Froude's 'Life in London,' vol. ii. pp. 156-7.

or what on earth to do with it.' He worked hard at it, nevertheless, for eighteen months, and by the end of May 1858, the first instalment was all in type. Froude remarks that a fine critic once said to him that Carlyle's Friedrich Wilhelm was as peculiar and original as Sterne's Tristram Shandy; certainly as distinct a personality as exists in English fiction. Carlyle made a second journey to Germany. Shortly after his return, the already finished volumes of *Frederick* appeared, and they met with an immediate welcome. The success was great; 2000 copies were sold at the first issue, and a second 2000 were disposed of almost as rapidly, and a third 2000 followed. Mrs Carlyle's health being unsatisfactory, Carlyle took a house for the summer at Humbie, near Aberdour in Fife. They returned to Cheyne Row in October, neither of them benefited by their holiday in the north.

While many of Carlyle's intimate friends were passing away, he formed Ruskin's acquaintance, which turned out mutually satisfactory. On the 23rd April 1861, Carlyle writes to his brother John: 'Friday last I was persuaded—in fact had unwarily compelled myself, as it were—to a lecture of Ruskin's at the Institution, Albemarle Street. Lecture on Tree Leaves as physiological, pictorial, moral, symbolical objects. A crammed house, but tolerable to me even in the gallery. The lecture was thought to "break down," and indeed it quite did "*as a lecture*"; but only did from *embarras*

des richesses—a rare case. Ruskin did blow asunder as by gunpowder explosions his leaf notions, which were manifold, curious, genial; and, in fact, I do not recollect to have heard in that place any neatest thing I liked so well as this chaotic one.' *

Frederick was progressing, though slowly, as he found the ore in the German material at his disposal "nowhere smelted out of it." The third volume was finished and published in the summer of 1862; the fourth volume was getting into type; and the fifth and last was finished in January 1865. 'It nearly killed me,' Carlyle writes in his journal, 'it, and my poor Jane's dreadful illness, now happily over. No sympathy could be found on earth for those horrid struggles of twelve years, nor happily was any needed. On Sunday evening in the end of January (1865) I walked out, with the multiplex feeling—joy not very prominent in it, but a kind of solemn thankfulness traceable, that I had written the last sentence of that unutterable book, and, contrary to many forebodings in bad hours, had actually got done with it for ever.'

In England it was at once admitted, says Froude, that a splendid addition had been made to the national literature. 'The book contained, if nothing else, a gallery of historical figures executed with a skill which placed Carlyle at the head of literary portrait painters.

* Froude's 'Life in London,' vol. ii. p. 245.

. . . No critic, after the completion of *Frederick*, challenged Carlyle's right to a place beside the greatest of English authors, past or present.' The work was translated instantly into German, calling forth the warmest appreciation.

CHAPTER VI

RECTORIAL ADDRESS—DEATH OF MRS CARLYLE

After a round of holiday visits, including one to Annandale, the Carlyles settled down once more at Cheyne Row in the summer of 1865. 'The great outward event of Carlyle's own life,' observes Froude, 'Scotland's public recognition of him, was now lying close ahead. This his wife was to live to witness as her final happiness in this world.' Here is an eloquent passage from the same pen: 'I had been at Edinburgh,' writes Froude, 'and had heard Gladstone make his great oration on Homer there, on retiring from office as Rector. It was a grand display. I never recognised before what oratory could do; the audience being kept for three hours in a state of electric tension, bursting every moment into applause. Nothing was said which seemed of moment when read deliberately afterwards; but the voice was like enchantment, and the street, when we left the building, was ringing with a prolongation of cheers. Perhaps in all Britain there was not a man whose views on all subjects, in heaven and earth, less resembled Gladstone's than those of

the man whom this same applauding multitude elected to take his place. The students too, perhaps, were ignorant how wide the contradiction was; but if they had been aware of it they need not have acted differently. Carlyle had been one of themselves. He had risen from among them—not by birth or favour, not on the ladder of any established profession, but only by the internal force that was in him—to the highest place as a modern man of letters. In *Frederick* he had given the finish to his reputation; he stood now at the summit of his fame; and the Edinburgh students desired to mark their admiration in some signal way. He had been mentioned before, but he had declined to be nominated, for a party only were then in his favour. On this occasion, the students were unanimous, or nearly so. His own consent was all that was wanting.'* This consent was obtained, and Carlyle was chosen Rector of Edinburgh University. But the Address troubled him. He resolved, however, as his father used to say, to 'gar himself go through with the thing,' or at least to try. Froude says he was very miserable, but that Mrs Carlyle 'kept up his spirits, made fun of his fears, bantered him, encouraged him, herself at heart as much alarmed as he was, but conscious, too, of the ridiculous side of it.' She thought of accompanying him, but her health would not permit of the effort. Both Huxley and Tyndall were going

* Froude's 'Life in London,' vol. ii. p. 295.

down, and Tyndall promised Mrs Carlyle to take care of her husband.

On Monday morning, the 29th of March, 1866, Carlyle and his wife parted. 'The last I saw of her,' he said, 'was as she stood with her back to the parlour door to bid me good-bye. She kissed me twice, she me once, I her a second time.' They parted for ever.

Edinburgh was reached in due course, and what happened there had best be told by an eye-witness, Professor Masson. 'On the night following Carlyle's arrival in town,' he says, 'after he had settled himself in Mr Erskine of Linlathen's house, where he was to stay during his visit, he and his brother John came to my house in Rosebery Crescent, that they might have a quiet smoke and talk over matters. They sat with me an hour or more, Carlyle as placid and hearty as could be, talking most pleasantly, a little dubious, ndeed, as to how he might get through his Address, but for the rest unperturbed. As to the Address itself, when the old man stood up in the Music Hall before the assembled crowd, and threw off his Rectorial robes, and proceeded to speak, slowly, connectedly, and nobly, raising his left hand at the end of each section or paragraph to stroke the back of his head as he cogitated what he was to say next, the crowd listening as they had never listened to a speaker before, and reverent even in those parts of the hall where he was least audible,—who that was present will ever forget that

sight? That day, and on the subsequent days of his stay, there were, of course, dinners and other gatherings in Carlyle's honour. One such dinner, followed by a larger evening gathering, was in my house. Then, too, he was in the best of possible spirits, courteous in manner and in speech to all, and throwing himself heartily into whatever turned up. At the dinner-table, I remember, Lord Neaves favoured us with one or two of his humorous songs or recitatives, including his clever quiz called "Stuart Mill on Mind and Matter," written to the tune of "Roy's wife of Aldivalloch." No one enjoyed the thing more than Carlyle; and he surprised me by doing what I had never heard him do before,—actually joining with his own voice in the chorus. "Stuart Mill on Mind and Matter, Stuart Mill on Mind and Matter," he chaunted laughingly along with Lord Neaves every time the chorus came round, beating time in the air emphatically with his fist. It was hardly otherwise, or only otherwise inasmuch as the affair was more ceremonious and stately, at the dinner given to him in the Douglas Hotel by the Senatus Academicus, and in which his old friend Sir David Brewster presided. There, too, while dignified and serene, Carlyle was thoroughly sympathetic and convivial. Especially I remember how he relished and applauded the songs of our academic laureate and matchless chief in such things, Professor Douglas Maclagan, and how, before we broke up, he

expressly complimented Professor Maclagan on having "contributed so greatly to the hilarity of the evening."'*

The most graphic account of Carlyle's installation as Lord Rector is that by Alexander Smith, the author of 'A Life Drama,' 'Summer in Skye,' &c., &c., whose lamented death took place a few months after that event. 'Curious stories,' he wrote, 'are told of the eagerness on every side manifested to hear Mr Carlyle. Country clergymen from beyond Aberdeen came to Edinburgh for the sole purpose of hearing and seeing. Gentlemen came down from London by train the night before, and returned to London by train the night after. Nay, it was even said that an enthusiast, dwelling in the remote west of Ireland, intimated to the officials who had charge of the distribution, that if a ticket should be reserved for him, he would gladly come the whole way to Edinburgh. Let us hope a ticket *was* reserved. On the day of the address, the doors of the Music Hall were besieged long before the hour of opening had arrived; and loitering about there on the outskirts of the crowd, one could not help glancing curiously down Pitt Street, towards the "lang toun of Kirkcaldy," dimly seen beyond the Forth; for on the sands there, in the early years of the century, Edward Irving was accustomed to pace up and down solitarily, and "as if the sands were his own," people say, who remember, when they were boys, seeing the tall, ardent, black-haired, swift-

* Masson's 'Carlyle Personally and in his Writings,' pp. 27-9.

gestured, squinting man, often enough. And to Kirkcaldy, too, ... came young Carlyle from Edinburgh College, wildly in love with German and mathematics; and the schoolroom in which these men taught, although incorporated in Provost Swan's manufactory, is yet kept sacred and intact, and but little changed these fifty years—an act of hero-worship for which the present and other generations may be thankful. It seemed to me that so glancing Fife-wards, and thinking of that noble friendship—of the David and Jonathan of so many years agone—was the best preparation for the man I was to see, and the speech I was to hear. David and Jonathan! Jonathan stumbled and fell on the dark hills, not of Gilboa, but of Vanity; and David sang his funeral song: "But for him I had never known what the communion of man with man means. His was the freest, brotherliest, bravest human soul mine ever came in contact with. I call him, on the whole, the best man I have ever, after trial enough, found in this world, or now hope to find."

'In a very few minutes after the doors were opened, the large hall was filled in every part; and when up the central passage the Principal, the Lord Rector, the Members of the Senate, and other gentlemen advanced towards the platform, the cheering was vociferous and hearty. The Principal occupied the chair, of course; the Lord Rector on his right, the Lord Provost on his left. When the platform gentlemen

had taken their seats, every eye was fixed on the Rector. To all appearance, as he sat, time and labour had dealt tenderly with him. His face had not yet lost the country bronze which he brought up with him from Dumfriesshire as a student, fifty-six years ago. His long residence in London had not touched his Annandale look, nor had it—as we soon learned—touched his Annandale accent. His countenance was striking, homely, sincere, truthful—the countenance of a man on whom "the burden of the unintelligible world" had weighed more heavily than on most. His hair was yet almost dark; his moustache and short beard were iron-grey. His eyes were wide, melancholy, sorrowful; and seemed as if they had been at times a-weary of the sun. Altogether, in his aspect there was something aboriginal, as of a piece of unhewn granite, which had never been polished to any approved pattern, whose natural and original vitality had never been tampered with. In a word, there seemed no passivity about Mr Carlyle; he was the diamond, and the world was his pane of glass; he was a graving tool, rather than a thing graven upon—a man to set his mark on the world—a man on whom the world could not set *its* mark. . . . . The proceedings began by the conferring of the degree of LL.D. on Mr Erskine of Linlathen—an old friend of Mr Carlyle's—on Professors Huxley, Tyndall, and Ramsay, and on Dr Rae, the Arctic explorer. That

done, amid a tempest of cheering and hats enthusiastically waved, Mr Carlyle, slipping off his Rectorial robe—which must have been a very shirt of Nessus to him—advanced to the table, and began to speak in low, wavering, melancholy tones, which were in accordance with the melancholy eyes, and in the Annandale accent with which his play-fellows must have been familiar long ago. So self-centred was he, so impregnable to outward influences, that all his years of Edinburgh and London life could not impair, even in the slightest degree, *that*. The opening sentences were lost in the applause, and when it subsided, the low, plaintive, quavering voice was heard going on: "Your enthusiasm towards me is very beautiful in itself, however undeserved it may be in regard to the object of it. It is a feeling honourable to all men, and one well known to myself when in a position analogous to your own." And then came the Carlylean utterance, with its far-reaching reminiscence and sigh over old graves—Father's and Mother's, Edward Irving's, John Sterling's, Charles Buller's, and all the noble known in past time—and with its flash of melancholy scorn. "There are now fifty-six years gone, last November, since I first entered your city, a boy of not quite fourteen—fifty-six years ago—to attend classes here, and gain knowledge of all kinds, I knew not what—with feelings of wonder and awe-struck expectation; and now, after a long, long course, this is what we have come to. . . . There is something

touching and tragic, and yet at the same time beautiful, to see the third generation, as it were, of my dear old native land, rising up, and saying: Well, you are not altogether an unworthy labourer in the vineyard. You have toiled through a great variety of fortunes, and have had many judges." And thereafter, without aid of notes, or paper preparation of any kind, in the same wistful, earnest, hesitating voice, and with many a touch of quaint humour by the way, which came in upon his subject like glimpses of pleasant sunshine, the old man talked to his vast audience about the origin and function of Universities, the Old Greeks and Romans, Oliver Cromwell, John Knox, the excellence of silence as compared with speech, the value of courage and truthfulness, and the supreme importance of taking care of one's health. "There is no kind of achievement you could make in the world that is equal to perfect health. What to it are nuggets and millions? The French financier said, 'Alas! why is there no sleep to be sold?' Sleep was not in the market at any quotation." But what need of quoting a speech which by this time has been read by everybody? Appraise it as you please, it was a thing *per se*. Just as, if you wish a purple dye, you must fish up the Murex; if you wish ivory, you must go to the East; so if you desire an address such as Edinburgh listened to the other day, you must go to Chelsea for it. It may not be quite to your taste, but, in any case, there

is no other intellectual warehouse in which that kind of article is kept in stock.' *

Another eye-witness, Mr Moncure D. Conway, says: 'When Carlyle sat down there was an audible sound, as of breath long held, by all present; then a cry from the students, an exultation; they rose up, all arose, waving their arms excitedly; some pressed forward, as if wishing to embrace him, or to clasp his knees; others were weeping; what had been heard that day was more than could be reported; it was the ineffable spirit that went forth from the deeps of a great heart and from the ages stored up in it, and deep answered unto deep.'

Immediately after the delivery of the address, Tyndall telegraphed to Mrs Carlyle this brief message, 'A perfect triumph.' That evening she dined at Forster's, where she met Dickens and Wilkie Collins. They drank Carlyle's health, and to her it was 'a good joy.' It was Carlyle's intention to have returned at once to London, but he changed his mind, and went for a few quiet days at Scotsbrig. When Tyndall was back in London Mrs Carlyle got all the particulars of the rectorial address from him, and was made perfectly happy about it.

Numberless congratulations poured in upon Mrs Carlyle, and for Saturday, April 21st, she had arranged a small tea-party. In the morning she wrote her daily letter to Carlyle, and in the afternoon she went out in

* Alexander Smith's 'Sketches and Criticisms,' pp. 101-8.

her brougham for a drive, taking her little dog with her. When near Victoria Gate, Hyde Park, she put the dog out to run. 'A passing carriage,' says Froude, 'went over its foot. . . . . She sprang out, caught the dog in her arms, took it with her into the brougham, and was never more seen alive. The coachman went twice round the drive, by Marble Arch down to Stanhope Gate, along the Serpentine and round again. Coming a second time near to the Achilles statue, and surprised to receive no directions, he turned round, saw indistinctly that something was wrong, and asked a gentleman near to look into the carriage. The gentleman told him briefly to take the lady to St. George's Hospital, which was not 200 yards distant. She was sitting with her hands folded in her lap *dead*.'*

At the hour she died Carlyle was enjoying the 'green solitudes and fresh spring breezes' of Annandale, 'quietly but far from happily.' About nine o'clock the same night his brother-in-law, Mr Aitken, broke the news to him. 'I was sitting in sister Jean's at Dumfries,' Carlyle wrote a fortnight after, 'thinking of my railway journey to Chelsea on Monday, and perhaps of a sprained ankle I had got at Scotsbrig two weeks or so before, when the fatal telegrams, two of them in succession, came. It had a kind of *stunning* effect upon me. Not for above two days could I

* Froude's 'Life in London,' vol. ii. p. 312.

estimate the immeasurable depths of it, or the infinite sorrow which had peeled my life all bare, and in a moment shattered my poor world to universal ruin. They took me out next day to wander, as was medically needful, in the green sunny Sabbath fields, and ever and anon there rose from my sick heart the ejaculation, "My poor little woman!" but no full gust of tears came to my relief, nor has yet come. Will it ever? A stony "Woe's me, woe's me!" sometimes with infinite tenderness and pity, not for myself, is my habitual mood hitherto.'*

On Monday morning Carlyle and his brother John set off for London. On the Wednesday he was on his way to Haddington with the remains, his brother and John Forster accompanying him. At 1 P.M. on Thursday the funeral took place. 'In the nave of the old Abbey Kirk,' wrote her disconsolate husband, 'long a ruin, now being saved from further decay, with the skies looking down on her, there sleeps my little Jeannie, and the light of her face will never shine on me more.' When Mr Conway saw him on his return to Cheyne Row, Carlyle said, 'Whatever triumph there may have been in that now so darkly overcast day, was indeed *hers*. Long, long years ago, she took her place by the side of a poor man of humblest condition, against all other provisions for her, undertook to share his lot for weal or woe; and

* Froude's 'Life in London,' vol. ii. p. 314.

in that office what she has been to him and done for him, how she has placed, as it were, velvet between him and all the sharp angularities of existence, remains now only in the knowledge of one man, and will presently be finally hid in his grave.' As he touchingly expressed it in the beautiful epitaph he wrote, the 'light of his life' had assuredly 'gone out.' Universal sympathy was felt for the bereaved husband, and he was very much affected by 'a delicate, graceful, and even affectionate' message from the Queen, conveyed by Lady Augusta Stanley through his brother John.

One who knew Mrs Carlyle intimately thus speaks of her: 'Her intellect was as clear and incisive as his, yet altogether womanly in character; her heart was as truthful, and her courage as unswerving. She was a wife in the noblest sense of that sacred name. She had a gift of literary expression as unique as his; as tender a sympathy with human sorrow and need; as clear an eye for all conventional hypocrisies and folly; as vivid powers of description and illustration; and also, it must be confessed, when the spirit of mockery was strong upon her, as keen an edge to her flashing wit and humour, and as scornful a disregard of the conventional proprieties. But she was no literary hermaphrodite. She never intellectually strode forth before the world upon masculine stilts; nor, in private life, did she frowardly push to the front, in the vanity of showing she was as clever and considerable as her

husband. She longed, with a true woman's longing heart, to be appreciated by him, and by those she loved; and, for her, all extraneous applause might whistle with the wind. But if her husband was a king in literature, so might she have been a queen. Her influence with him for good cannot be questioned by any one having eyes to discern. And if she sacrificed her own vanity for personal distinction, in order to make his work possible for him, who shall say she did not choose the nobler and better part?'*

On the other hand, Carlyle was too exacting, and when domestic differences arose he abstained from paying those little attentions which a delicate and sensitive woman might naturally expect from a husband who was so lavish of terms of endearment in the letters he wrote to her when away from her side. 'Even with that mother whom he so dearly loved,' observes Mrs Ireland, 'the intercourse was mainly composed of a silent sitting by the fireside of an evening in the old "houseplace," with a tranquillising pipe of tobacco, or of his returning from his long rambles to a simple meal, partaken of in comparative silence; and now and then, at meeting or parting, some pious and earnest words from the good soul to her son.'† And it never occurred to Carlyle to act differently with his wife, who was pining for his society. In addition

* Larkin's 'Carlyle and the Open Secret of his Life,' pp. 334-5.
† 'Life of Jane Welsh Carlyle,' pp. 191-2.

to all that, we have Froude's brief but accurate diagnosis of Carlyle's character. 'If,' he wrote, 'matters went well with himself, it never occurred to him that they could be going ill with any one else; and, on the other hand, if he was uncomfortable, he required everybody to be uncomfortable along with him.'

There was a strong element of selfishness in that phase of Carlyle's nature; and throughout his letters and journal he appears wholly wrapt up in himself and in his literary projects, without even a passing allusion to the courageous woman who had shared his lot. Now and again we alight upon a passage where special mention is made of her efforts, but these have all a direct or indirect bearing upon *his* work, *his* plans, *his* comforts.*

Carlyle never fully realised what his wife had been to him until she was suddenly snatched from his side. And this was his testimony: 'I say deliberately, her

* After reading the above estimate in the proof sheets, Professor Masson writes to me as follows:—

'May I hint that, in the passage about his character and domestic relations, you seem hardly to do justice to the depths of real kindness and tenderness in him, and the actual *couthiness* of his manner and fireside conversation in his most genial hours? He was delightful and loveable at such hours, with a fund of the raciest Scottish humour.'

This is a side of Carlyle's nature which would naturally be hidden from the general reader, and from Mr Froude. It is easy to imagine how Carlyle's genial humour, frozen at its source in the company of the solemnly pessimistic Froude, should be thawed by the presence of 'a brither Scot.'

part in the stern battle, and except myself none knows how stern, was brighter and braver than my own.' In one of those terrible moments of self-upbraiding the grief-stricken husband exclaims: 'Blind and deaf that we are; oh, think, if thou yet love anybody living, wait not till death sweep down the paltry little dust-clouds and idle dissonances of the moment, and all be at last so mournfully clear and beautiful, *when it is too late!*'

In a pamphlet quoted by Mrs Ireland we have a pathetic picture of Carlyle in his lonely old age. A Mr Swinton, an American gentleman on a visit to this country, went to see the grave of Mrs Carlyle.

In conversation the grave-digger said: 'Mr Carlyle comes here from London now and then to see this grave. He is a gaunt, shaggy, weird kind of old man, looking very old the last time he was here.' 'He is eighty-six now,' said I. 'Ay,' he repeated, eighty-six, and comes here to this grave all the way from London.' And I told him that Carlyle was a great man, the greatest man of the age in books, and that his name was known all over the world; but he thought there were other great men lying near at hand, though I told him their fame did not reach beyond the graveyard, and brought him back to talk of Carlyle. 'Mr Carlyle himself,' said the gravedigger softly, 'is to be brought here to be buried with his wife. Ay, he comes here lonesome and alone,' continued the grave-digger, 'when he visits the wife's grave. His niece

keeps him company to the gate, but he leaves her there, and she stays there for him. The last time he was here I got a sight of him, and he was bowed down under his white hairs, and he took his way up by that ruined wall of the old cathedral, and round there and in here by the gateway, and he tottered up here to this spot.' Softly spake the gravedigger, and paused. Softer still, in the broad dialect of the Lothians, he proceeded :—"And he stood here awhile in the grass, and then he kneeled down and stayed on his knees at the grave; then he bent over and I saw him kiss the ground—ay, he kissed it again and again, and he kept kneeling, and it was a long time before he rose and tottered out of the cathedral, and wandered through the graveyard to the gate, where his niece was waiting for him." This is the epitaph composed by Carlyle, and engraved on the tombstone of Dr John Welsh in the chancel of Haddington Church :—

'Here likewise now rests Jane Welsh Carlyle, Spouse of Thomas Carlyle, Chelsea, London. She was born at Haddington, 14th July 1801, only daughter of the above John Welsh, and of Grace Welsh, Capelgill, Dumfriesshire, his wife. In her bright existence she had more sorrows than are common; but also a soft invincibility, a clearness of discernment, and a noble loyalty of heart which are rare. For forty years she was the true and ever-loving helpmate of her husband, and, by act and word, unweariedly forwarded him as none else could, in all of worthy that he did or attempted. She died at London, 21st April 1866, suddenly snatched away from him, and the light of his life as if gone out.'

CHAPTER VII

LAST YEARS AND DEATH OF CARLYLE

In presence of the pathetically tragic spectacle of Carlyle in his old age, who can have the heart to enter into his domestic life and weigh with pedantic scales the old man's blameworthiness? Carlyle survived his wife fifteen years. His brother John, himself a widower, was anxious that they should live together, but it was otherwise arranged. John returned to Scotland, and Carlyle remained alone in Cheyne Row. He was prevailed on to visit Ripple Court, near Walmer, and on his return to London he wrote, 'My home is very gaunt and lonesome; but such is my allotment henceforth in this world. I have taken loyally to my vacant circumstances, and will try to do my best with them.'

Carlyle's first public appearance after his sore bereavement was as chairman of the Eyre Committee as a protest against Governor Eyre's recall. 'Poor Eyre!' he wrote to a correspondent, 'I am heartily sorry for him, and for the English nation, which makes such a dismal fool of itself. Eyre, it seems, has fallen suddenly from £6000 a year into almost zero, and has a large family

and needy kindred dependent on him. Such his reward for saving the West Indies, and hanging one incendiary mulatto, well worth the gallows, if I can judge.'

Carlyle accepted a pressing invitation to stay with the Ashburtons at Mentone, and on the 22nd of December he started thither with Professor Tyndall. He was greatly benefited in health, and at intervals made some progress with his *Reminiscences*. He returned to London in March, and on the 4th of April 1867 he writes in his journal: 'Idle! Idle! My employments mere trifles of business, and that of dwelling on the days that culminated on the 21st of last year.' About this time his thoughts were directed to the estate of Craigenputtock, of which he became absolute owner at his wife's death. All her relations on the father's side were dead, and as Carlyle thought that it ought not to lapse to his own family, he determined to leave it to the University of Edinburgh, 'the rents of it to be laid out in supporting poor and meritorious students there, under the title of "the John Welsh Bursaries." Her name he could not give, because she had taken his own. Therefore he gave her father's.'

On June 22nd, he writes in his journal: 'Finished off on Thursday last, at three p.m. 20th of June, my poor *bequest* of Craigenputtock to Edinburgh University for bursaries. All quite ready there, Forster and Froude as witnesses; the good Professor Masson, who had taken endless pains, alike friendly and wise, being

at the very last objected to in the character of "witness," as "a party interested," said the Edinburgh lawyer. I a little regretted this circumstance; so I think did Masson secretly. He read us the deed with sonorous emphasis, bringing every word and note of it home to us. Then I signed; then they two—Masson witnessing only with his eyes and mind. I was deeply moved, as I well might be, but held my peace and shed no tears. *Tears* I think I have done with; never, except for moments together, have I wept for that catastrophe of April 21, to which whole days of weeping would have been in other times a blessed relief. . . . This is my poor "Sweetheart Abbey," "Cor Dulce," or New Abbey, a sacred casket and *tomb* for the sweetest "heart" which, in this bad, bitter world, was all my own. Darling, darling! and in a little while we shall *both* be at rest, and the Great God will have done with us what was His will.'*

When the Tories were preparing to 'dish the Whigs' over the Reform Bill, Carlyle felt impelled to write a pamphlet, which he called *Shooting Niagara, and After*. It was his final utterance on British politics. Proof sheets and revisions for new editions of his works engrossed his attention for some time. He went annually to Scotland, and devoted a great deal of time on his return to Chelsea to the sorting and annotating of his wife's letters.

* Froude's 'Life in London,' vol. ii. p. 346.

Early in 1869 the Queen expressed a wish, through Dean Stanley, to become personally acquainted with Carlyle. The meeting took place at Westminster Deanery: 'The Queen,' Carlyle said, 'was really very gracious and pretty in her demeanour throughout; rose greatly in my esteem by everything that happened; did not fall in any point. The interview was quietly very mournful to me; the one point of real interest, a sombre thought: "Alas! how would it have cheered her, bright soul, for my sake, had she been there!"'

When Carlyle was in constant expectation of his end, he—in June 1871—brought to Mr Froude's house a large parcel of papers. 'He put it in my hands,' says Froude. 'He told me to take it simply and absolutely as my own, without reference to any other person or persons, and to do with it as I pleased after he was gone. He explained, when he saw me surprised, that it was an account of his wife's history, that it was incomplete, that he could himself form no opinion whether it ought to be published or not, that he could do no more to it, and must pass it over to me. He wished never to hear of it again. I must judge. I must publish it, the whole, or part—or else destroy it all, if I thought that this would be the wiser thing to do.' *

Three years later Carlyle sent to Froude his own

* Froude's 'Life in London,' vol. ii. pp. 408-9.

and his wife's private papers, journals, correspondence, reminiscences, and other documents. 'Take them,' he said to Froude, 'and do what you can with them. All I can say to you is, Burn freely. If you have any affection for me, the more you burn the better.' Mr Froude burnt nothing, and it was well, he says, that he did not, for a year before his death he desired him, when he had done with the MSS., to give them to his niece. 'The new task which had been laid upon me,' writes Froude in his biography of Carlyle, 'complicated the problem of the "Letters and Memorials." My first hope was, that, in the absence of further definite instructions from himself, I might interweave parts of Mrs Carlyle's letters with his own correspondence in an ordinary narrative, passing lightly over the rest, and touching the dangerous places only so far as was unavoidable. In this view I wrote at leisure the greatest part of "the first forty years" of his life. The evasion of the difficulty was perhaps cowardly, but it was not unnatural. I was forced back, however, into the straighter and better course.' The outcome of it all is too well-known to call for recapitulation here.

In February 1874, the Emperor of Germany conferred upon Carlyle the Order of Merit which the great Frederick had himself founded. He could not refuse it, but he remarked, 'Were it ever so well meant, it can be of no value to me whatever. Do thee neither ill na gude.' Ten months later, Mr Disraeli, then

Premier, offered him the Grand Cross of the Bath along with a pension. Carlyle gracefully declined both.

Upon his 80th birthday, Carlyle was presented with a gold medal from Scottish friends and admirers, and with a letter from Prince Bismarck, both of which he valued highly. His last public act was to write a letter of three or four lines to the *Times*, which he explains to his brother in this fashion: 'After much urgency and with a dead-lift effort, I have this day [5th May 1877] got issued through the *Times* a small indispensable deliverance on the Turk and Dizzy question. Dizzy, it appears, to the horror of those who have any interest in him and his proceedings, has decided to have a new war for the Turk against all mankind; and this letter hopes to drive a nail through his mad and maddest speculations on that side.'

Froude tells us that Carlyle continued to read the Bible, 'the significance of which' he found 'deep and wonderful almost as much as it ever used to be.' The Bible and Shakespeare remained 'the best books" to him that were ever written.

The death of his brother John was a severe shock to Carlyle, for they were deeply attached to each other. When he bequeathed Craigenputtock to the University of Edinburgh, John Carlyle settled a handsome sum for medical bursaries there, to encourage poor students. 'These two brothers,' Froude remarks,

'born in a peasant's home in Annandale, owing little themselves to an Alma Mater which had missed discovering their merits, were doing for Scotland's chief University what Scotland's peers and merchants, with their palaces and deer forests and social splendour, had, for some cause, too imperfectly supplied.'

In the autumn of 1880, Carlyle became very infirm; in January he was visibly sinking; and on the 5th of February 1881, he passed away in his eighty-fifth year. In accordance with his expressed wishes, they buried him in the old kirkyard of Ecclefechan with his own people.

At his death Carlyle's fame was at its zenith. A revulsion of feeling was caused by the publication of Froude's *Life of Carlyle* and the *Reminiscences*. In regard to the former, great dissatisfaction was created by the somewhat unflattering portrait painted by Froude. Was Froude justified in presenting to the public Carlyle in all grim realism? The answer to this depends upon one's notions of literary ethics. The view of the average biographer is that he must suppress faults and give prominence to virtues. The result is that the majority of biographies are simply expanded funeral sermons; instead of a life-like portrait we have a glorified mummy. Boswell's *Johnson* stands at the head of biographies; but, if Boswell had followed the conventional method, his book would long since have passed into obscurity. It is open to dispute whether Froude

has not overdone the sombre elements in Carlyle's life. Readers of Professor Masson's little book, which shows Carlyle in a more genially human mood, have good reason to suspect that Froude has given too much emphasis to the Rembrandtesque element in Carlyle's life. At the time of the publication of the *Reminiscences* a furious hubbub arose regarding Mr Froude's editorial wisdom. In the course of the controversy the present writer wrote an article, which he forwarded to Mr Froude, who replied in a letter which, at his own request, was kept private. The dispute is long since ended, and there is no further need of withholding the letter from publication. It runs as follows:

'5 Onslow Gardens, S.W.,
'*April* 24, 1882.

'DEAR SIR,—I return your article which is (or was when it appeared) a rational protest against an altogether foolish outcry. No one except myself was in a position to know what ought and what ought not to be published. You are mistaken only in supposing that Carlyle's family interposed. Mrs Alexander Carlyle wrote letters to the papers, but Mr Carlyle's surviving brothers and sisters did not support her. They were content with Mr Carlyle's own arrangements, and did not interfere in any way. I mention this merely for yourself. *You will, of course, make no public use of this*

information. If *they* wish to take any public part in this controversy they must choose their own time.

'The clamour last year was, I believe, the work of two or three individuals. When people do not know what to say or think, they follow the first voice that makes itself heard,—as the pack follows the first dog that gives tongue. But they generally come right on calm reflection.

'Your faithful servant,

'J. A FROUDE.'

CHAPTER VIII

CARLYLE AS A SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THINKER

In his essay on Carlyle, Mr John Morley utters a protest against the habit of labelling great men with names. After making every allowance for the waywardness of the men of intuitive and poetic insight, it remains true that between the speculative and the practical sides of a great thinker's mind there is a potent, though subtle, connection. For those who take the trouble of searching, there is discoverable such a connection between the speculative ideas of Carlyle and his practical outlook upon civilisation. Given a thinker who lays stress upon the emotional side of progress, and we have a thinker who will take for heroes men of mystical tendencies, of strong dominating passions, a thinker who will value progress not by the increase of worldly comfort, but by the increase in the number of magnetic, epoch-making personalities. Naturally, we hear Carlyle remark that the history of the world is at bottom the history of its great men.

Carlyle's fanatical adoption of intuitionalism has told banefully upon his work in sociology. Trusting to his

inner light, to what we might call Mystical Quakerism, Carlyle has dispensed with a rational theory of progress. Before a sociological problem, his attitude is not that of the patient thinker, but of the hysterical prophet, whose emotions find outlet in declamatory denunciation. Like the prophets of old, Carlyle tends towards Pessimism. His golden age is in the past. When *Past and Present* appeared, many earnest-minded men, captivated by the style and spirit of the book, hailed Carlyle as a social reformer. As an attempt to solve the social problem, *Past and Present* is not a success. Carlyle could do no more than tell the modern to return to the spirit of the feudal period, when the people were led by the aristocracy. It showed considerable audacity on Carlyle's part to come to the interpretation of history with no theory of progress, no message to the world beyond the vaguely declamatory one that those nations will be turned into hell which forget God. Of what value is such writing as this, taken from the introduction to his *Cromwell*?:—'Here of our own land and lineage in English shape were heroes on the earth once more, who knew in every fibre and with heroic daring laid to heart that an Almighty Justice does verily rule this world, that it is good to fight on God's side, and bad to fight on the Devil's side! The essence of all heroism and veracities that have been or will be.' This is simply a reproduction of Jewish theocratic ideas; indeed, except for the details, Carlyle might as readily

have written a life of Moses as of Cromwell. In the eyes of Carlyle, human life was what it was to Bunyan, a kind of pilgrim's progress; only in the Carlylean creed it is all battle and no victory, all Valley of Humiliation and no Delectable Mountain. Naturally, where no stress is laid upon collective action, where individual reason is depreciated, progress is associated with the rise of abnormal individualities, men of strong wills like Cromwell and Frederick. With Rousseau, Carlyle appears to look upon civilisation as a disease. In one of his essays, *Characteristics*, he goes near the Roussean idea when he declaims against self-consciousness, and deliberately gives a preference to instinct. The uses of great men are to lead humanity away from introspection back to energetic, rude, instinctive action. When humanity will not listen to the voice of the prophets, it must be treated to whip and scorpion. It never dawned upon Carlyle that the highest life, individual and collective, has roots in physical laws, that politico-economic forces must be reckoned with before social harmony can be reached.

Just as Carlyle's Idealism drove him into opposition to the utilitarian theory of morals, so it drove him into opposition to the utilitarian theory of society. Out of his idealistic way of looking upon life there flowed a curious result. As early as *Sartor Resartus* we find Carlyle anticipating the evolutionary conception of

society. Spencer has familiarised us with the idea that society is an organism. The idea which he received from the Germans that Nature is not a mere mechanical collection of atoms, but the materialised expression of a spiritual unity—that idea Carlyle extended to society. As he puts it in *Sartor Resartus:* 'Yes, truly, if Nature is one, and a living indivisible whole, much more is Mankind, the Image that reflects and creates Nature, without which Nature were not. . . . Noteworthy also, and serviceable for the progress of this same individual, wilt thou find his subdivisions into Generations. Generations are as the Days of toilsome Mankind; Death and Birth are the vesper and the matin bells, that summon Mankind to sleep, and to rise refreshed for new advancement. What the Father has made, the Son can make and enjoy; but has also work of his own appointed him. Thus all things wax and roll onwards. . . . Find mankind where thou wilt, thou findest it in living movement, in progress faster or slower; the Phœnix soars aloft, hovers with outstretched wings, filling Earth with her music; or as now, she sinks, and with spheral swan-song immolates herself in flame, that she may soar the higher and sing the clearer.'

Philosophies of civilisation have a tendency to beget Fatalism. Bent upon watching the resistless play of general laws, philosophers, in their admiration of the products, are apt to ignore the frightful suffering and

waste involved in the process. Society being an organism, a thing of development, the duty of thinkers is to demonstrate the nature of sociological laws, and allow them free scope for operation. To this is due much of the apparent hardness of Eighteenth Century political speculation, which, beginning with the French Physiocratic School, culminated in the works of Adam Smith, Ricardo, Bentham, and the two Mills. With those thinkers, the one palpable lesson of the past was the duty of abstaining from interference with the general process of social development. Give man liberty, said the Utilitarian Radicals, and he will work out his own salvation: from the play of individual self-interest, social harmony will result.

Carlyle is frequently thought of as a Conservative force in politics. In some respects he was more Radical than the Benthams and the Mills. His deeper ideal conception of society intensified his dissatisfaction with society as it existed. In fact, to Carlyle's attack upon those institutions, beliefs and ceremonies which had no better basis than mere unreasoning authority, most of the Radicalism of the early 'forties' was due. Conceive what effect language like this must have had upon thoughtful, high-souled young men: 'Call ye that a Society, where there is no longer any Social Idea extant; not so much as the Idea of a common Home, but only of a common overcrowded Lodging-house? Where each,

isolated, regardless of his neighbour, turned against his neighbour, clutches what he can get, and cries "Mine!" and calls it Peace because, in the cut-purse and cut-throat Scramble, no steel knives, but only a far cunninger sort, can be employed? Where Friendship, Communion, has become an incredible tradition; and your holiest Sacramental Supper is a smoking Tavern Dinner, with Cook for Evangelist? Where your Priest has no tongue but for plate-licking; and your high Guides and Governors cannot guide; but on all hands hear it passionately proclaimed: *Laissez faire;* leave us alone of your guidance, such light is darker than darkness; eat your wages and sleep. Thus, too, must an observant eye discern everywhere that saddest spectacle: the Poor perishing, like neglected, foundered Draught-Cattle, of Hunger and Overwork; the Rich, still more wretchedly, of Idleness, Satiety, and Overgrowth. The Highest in rank, at length, without honour from the Lowest; scarcely, with a little mouth-honour, as from tavern-waiters who expect to put it in the bill. Once sacred Symbols fluttering as empty Pageants, whereof men grudge even the expense; a World becoming dismantled: in one word, the CHURCH fallen speechless, from obesity and apoplexy; the STATE shrunken into a Police-Office, straitened to get its pay!'

It was when suggesting a remedy that Carlyle's Idealistic Radicalism parted company with Utili-

tarian Radicalism. Failing to see that society was in a transition period, a period so well described by Herbert Spencer as the movement from Militarism to Industrialism, in which there was a severe conflict of ideals, opinions, and interests, Carlyle sought for the remedy in a return to a form of society which had been outgrown. There was surely something pathetically absurd in the spectacle of a great teacher endeavouring to cure social and political diseases by preaching the resuscitation of Puritanism at a time when the intellect of the day was parting company with theocratic conceptions. Equally absurd was it to offer as a remedy for social anarchy the despotism of ambitious rulers at a time when society was suffering from the effects of previous despotism. Equally irrelevant was the attempt in *Past and Present* to get reformers to model modern institutions on those of the Middle Ages. Carlyle's remedy for the evils of liberty was a return to the apron-strings of despotism. Carlyle, in fact, forgot his conception of society as a developing organism; he endeavoured to arrest progress at the autocratic stage, because of his ignorance of the laws of progress and his lack of sympathy with democratic ideas. Still, the value of Carlyle's political writings should not be overlooked. The Utilitarian Radicals laid themselves open to the charge of intellectual superstition. They worshipped human nature as a fetish. Lacking clear views of social evolution, they

overlooked the relativity of political terms. Ignorant of the conception of human nature to which Spencer has accustomed us, the old Radicals treated it as a constant quantity which only needed liberty for its proper development. In their eagerness to discard theology, they discarded the truth of man's depravity which finds expression in the creed of the Churches. We have changed all that. We now realise the fact that political institutions are good or bad, not as they stand or fall when tested by the first principles of a rationalistic philosophy, but as they harmonise or conflict with existing phases of human nature.

If in the sphere of industrialism Carlyle as a guide is untrustworthy, great is his merit as an inspirer. His influence was needed to counteract the cold prosaic narrowness of the Utilitarian teaching. He called attention to an aspect of the economic question which the Utilitarian Radicals ignored, namely, the inadequacy of self-interest as a social bond. To Carlyle is largely due the higher ethical conceptions and quickened sympathies which now exist in the spheres of social and industrial relationships. Unhappily his implicit faith in intuitionalism led him to deride political economy and everything pertaining to man's material life. Much there was in the writings of the economists to call for severe criticism, and if Carlyle had treated the subject with discrimination he would have been a power for good; but he chose to pour the vials of his

contempt upon political economy as a science, and upon modern industrial arrangements, with the result that many of the most intelligent students of sociology have been repelled from his writings. In this respect he contrasts very unfavourably with Mill, who, notwithstanding the temptations to intellectual arrogance from his one-sided training, with quite a chivalrous regard for truth, was ever ready to accept light and leading from thinkers who differed from him in temperament and methods. There may be conflicting opinions as to which of the two men was intellectually the greater, but there can be no doubt that Mill dwelt in an atmosphere of intellectual serenity and nobility far removed from the foggy turbulence in which Carlyle lived, moved, and had his being. Between the saintly apostle of Progress and the barbaric representative of Reaction there was a great gulf fixed.

As was natural, the *Latter-day Pamphlets* were treated as a series of political ravings. For that estimate Carlyle himself was largely responsible. He deprived himself of the sympathy of intelligent readers by the violence of his invective and the lack of discrimination in his abuse. Much of what Carlyle said is to be found in Mill's *Representative Government*, said, too, in a quiet, rational style, which commands attention and respect. Mill, no more than Carlyle, was a believer in mob rule. He did not think that

the highest wisdom was to be had by the counting of heads. Thinkers like Mill and Spencer did not deem it necessary to pour contempt on modern tendencies. They suggested remedies on the lines of these tendencies. They did not try to put back the hands on the clock of time; they sought to remove perturbing influences. Much of the evil has arisen from men trying to do by political methods what should not be done by these methods. Carlyle's idea that Government should do this, that, and the other thing has wrought mischief, inasmuch as it has led to an undue belief in the virtues of Government interference. His writings are largely responsible for the evils he predicted.

It is curious to notice how, with all his belief in individualism, Carlyle, in political matters, was unconsciously driven in the direction of socialism. Get your great man, worship him, and render him obedience —such was the Carlylean recipe for modern diseases. Suppose the great man found, how is he to proceed? In these democratic days, he can only proceed by ruling despotically with the popular consent; in other words, there will follow a regime of paternalism and fraternalism, the practical outcome of which would be Socialism. Carlyle himself never suspected how childish was his conception of national life. He wrote of his Great Man theory as if it was a discovery, whereas the most advanced races had long since passed through it, and those which were not advanced were precisely

those which had not been able to shake themselves free of paternal despotism. On this point the criticism of the late Professor Minto goes to the heart of the matter: 'Carlyle's doctrines are the first suggestions of an earnest man, adhered to with unreasoning tenacity. As a rule, with no exception, that is worth naming, they take account mainly of one side of a case. He was too impatient of difficulties, and had too little respect for the wisdom and experience of others to submit to be corrected: opposition rather confirmed him in his own opinion. Most of his practical suggestions had already been made before, and judged impracticable upon grounds which he could not, or would not, understand. His modes of dealing with pauperism and crime were in full operation under the despotism of Henry VII. and Henry VIII. His theory of a hero-king, which means in practice an accidentally good and able man in a series of indifferent or bad despots, had been more frequently tried than any other political system; Asia at this moment contains no government that is not despotic. His views in other departments of knowledge are also chiefly determined by the strength of his unreasoning impulses.'

In his interesting *Recollections* Mr Espinasse states that during the time that Carlyle was writing on the labour question, not a single blue-book was visible on his table! To Carlyle's influence must be traced much of the sentimental treatment of social and in-

dustrial questions which has followed the unpopularity of political economy. It is only fair to Carlyle to note, that at times he had qualms as to the superiority of his paternal theory of government over Laissez Faire. In one place he admits that even Frederick could not have superintended the great emigration movement to such good effect as was done by the spontaneous efforts of nature. In the social sphere Carlyle was false to his doctrine of spontaneity. In his early essays he was perpetually condemning mechanical interference with society, and contending that free play should be given to the dynamic agencies. Untrue to himself and his creed, Carlyle in his later books was constantly denouncing Government for neglecting to apply mechanical remedies for social diseases. In his view, the duty of a ruler was not to work in harmony with social impulses, but to cut and carve institutions in harmony with the ideas of great men. Puritanism under Cromwell failed because it was forgotten that society is an organism, not a piece of clay, to be moulded according to the notions of heroic potters. Strictly speaking, *Frederick* and *Cromwell* should be classed with the *Latter Day Pamphlets.* In the *Pamphlets* Carlyle declaims against democratic methods, and in *Frederick* and *Cromwell* we are presented with incarnations of autocratic methods.

Of all the critics of Carlyle, no one has surpassed Mr Morley in indicating the mischievous effects which

flow from the elevation of mere will power and emotional force into guides in social and political questions. As Mr Morley says: 'The dictates of a kind heart are of superior force to the maxims of political economy; swift and peremptory resolution is a safer guide than a balancing judgment. If the will works easily and surely, we may assume the rectitude of the moving impulse. All this is no caricature of a system which sets sentiment, sometimes hard sentiment, above reason and method. In other words, the writer who in these days has done more than anybody else to fire men's hearts with a feeling for right, and an eager desire for social activity, has, with deliberate contempt, thrust away from him the only instruments by which we can make sure what right is, and that our social action is effective. A born poet, only wanting perhaps a clearer feeling for form and a more delicate spiritual self-possession to have added another name to the illustrious band of English singers, he has been driven by the impetuosity of his sympathies to attack the scientific side of social questions in an imaginative and highly emotional manner.'

Had Carlyle confined himself to description of social, industrial, and political diseases, he would have had an unsullied reputation in the sphere of spiritual dynamics, but flaws immediately appeared when he endeavoured to prescribe remedies. Many of his

remedies were too vague to be of use; where they were specific, they were so Quixotic as to be useless. His proposals for dealing with labour and pauperism never imposed on any sensible man on this side of cloud-land.

CHAPTER IX

CARLYLE AS AN INSPIRATIONAL FORCE

It is the misfortune of the critic, the historian, and the sociologist to be superseded. In the march of events the specialist is fated to be left behind. The influence of the inspirationalist is ever-enduring. As the present writer has elsewhere said:—Carlyle has been called a prophet. The word in these days has only a vague meaning. Probably Carlyle earned the name in consequence of the oracular and denunciatory elements in his later writings. Then, again, the word prophet has come to be associated with the thought of a foreteller of future events. A prophet in the true sense of the word is not one who foretells the future, but one who revives and keeps alive in the minds of his contemporaries a vivid sense of the great elemental facts of life. Why is it that the Bible attracts to its pages men of all kinds of temperament and all degrees of culture? Because in it, especially in the Psalms, Job, and the writings of Isaiah and his brother prophets, serious people are brought face to face with the great mysteries, God,

Nature, Man, Death, etc.—mysteries, however, which only rush in upon the soul of man in full force on special occasions, in hours of lonely meditation, or by the side of an open grave. In the hurly-burly of life the sense of what Carlyle calls the Immensities, Eternities, and Silences, become so weak that even good men have sorrowfully to admit that they live lives of practical materialism. As Arnold puts it:

> "Each day brings its petty dust
> Our soon-choked souls to fill,
> And we forget because we must,
> And not because we will."

The mission of the Hebrew prophet was by passionate utterance to keep alive in the minds of his countrymen a deep, abiding sense of life's mystery, sacredness, and solemnity. What Isaiah did for his day, Carlyle did for the moderns. In the whole range of modern literature, it is impossible to match Carlyle's magnificent passages in *Sartor Resartus*, in which, under a biographical guise, he deals with the great primal emotions, wonder, awe, admiration, love, which form the warp and woof of human life.

Nothing can be finer than the following rebuke to those mechanical scientists who imagine that Nature can be measured by tape-lines, and duly labelled in museums:—

'System of Nature! To the wisest man, wide as is his vision, Nature remains of quite *infinite* depth, of

quite infinite expansion; and all Experience thereof limits itself to some few computed centuries and measured square-miles. The course of Nature's phases, on this our little fraction of a Planet, is partially known to us; but who knows what deeper courses these depend on; what infinitely larger Cycle (of causes) our little Epicycle revolves on? To the Minnow every cranny and pebble, and quality and accident, of its little native Creek may have become familiar: but does the Minnow understand the Ocean Tides and periodic Currents, the Trade-winds, and Monsoons, and Moon's eclipses; by all which the condition of its little Creek is regulated, and may, from time (*un*miraculously enough), be quite overset and reversed? Such a minnow is Man; his Creek this Planet Earth; his Ocean the immeasurable All; his Monsoons and periodic Currents the mysterious Course of Providence through Æons of Æons. We speak of the Volume of Nature: and truly a Volume it is,—whose Author and Writer is God.'

Agree or disagree with Carlyle's views of the Ultimate Reality as we may, there can be nothing but harmony with the spirit which breathes in the following:—

'Nature? Ha! Why do I not name thee God? Art not thou the "Living Garment of God"? O Heavens, is it in very deed, He, then, that ever speaks through thee; that lives and loves in thee, that lives and loves in me?

'Fore-shadows, call them rather fore-splendours, of that Truth, and Beginning of Truths, fell mysteriously over my soul. Sweeter than Dayspring to the Ship-wrecked in Nova Zembla; ah! like the mother's voice to her little child that strays bewildered, weeping in unknown tumults; like soft streamings of celestial music to my too-exasperated heart, came that Evangel. The Universe is not dead and demoniacal, a charnel-house with spectres; but godlike, and my Father's!'

The mystery and fleetingness of life with its awful counterpart death, are the commonplaces of every hour, but who but Carlyle has rendered them with such inspirational power?

'Generation after generation takes to itself the form of a Body; and forth-issuing from Cimmerian Night, on Heaven's mission APPEARS. What Force and Fire is in each he expends: one grinding in the mill of Industry; one hunter-like climbing the giddy Alpine heights of Science; one madly dashed to pieces on the rocks of Strife, in war with his fellow:—and then the Heaven-sent is recalled; his earthly Vesture falls away, and soon even to sense becomes a vanished Shadow. Thus, like some wild-flaming, wild-thundering train of Heaven's Artillery, does this mysterious MANKIND thunder and flame, in long-drawn, quick-succeeding grandeur, through the unknown Deep. Thus, like a God-created, fire-breathing Spirit-host, we

emerge from the Inane; haste stormfully across the astonished Earth; then plunge again into the Inane. Earth's mountains are levelled, and her seas filled up, in our passage; can the Earth, which is but dead and a vision, resist Spirits which have reality and are alive? On the hardest adamant some footprint of us is stamped in; the last Rear of the host will read traces of the earliest Van. But whence?—O Heaven, whither? Sense knows not; Faith knows not; only that it is through Mystery to Mystery, from God and to God.

> 'We *are such stuff*
> As Dreams are made of, and our little Life
> Is rounded with a sleep?'

A fervid perception of the evanescence and sorrows of life is the root of Carlyle's pathos, which is unsurpassed in literature. It leads him to some beautiful contrasts between childhood and manhood, positively idyllic in their charm.

'Happy season of Childhood!' exclaims Teufelsdröckh: 'Kind Nature, that art to all a bountiful mother; that visitest the poor man's hut with auroral radiance; and for thy Nurseling hast provided a soft swathing of Love and infinite Hope, wherein he waxes and slumbers, danced-round (*umgäukelt*) by sweetest Dreams! If the paternal Cottage still shuts us in, its roof still screens us; with a Father we have as yet a prophet, priest and king, and an Obedience that

makes us Free. The young spirit has awakened out of Eternity, and knows not what we mean by Time; as yet Time is no fast-hurrying stream, but a sportful sunlit ocean; years to the child are as ages; ah! the secret of Vicissitude, of that slower or quicker decay and ceaseless down-rushing of the universal World-fabric, from the granite mountain to the man or day-moth, is yet unknown; and in a motionless Universe, we taste, what afterwards in this quick-whirling Universe is forever denied us, the balm of Rest. Sleep on, thou fair Child, for thy long rough journey is at hand! A little while, and thou too shalt sleep no more, but thy very dreams shall be mimic battles; thou too, with old Arnauld, must say in stern patience: "Rest? Rest? Shall I not have all Eternity to rest in?" Celestial Nepenthe! though a Pyrrhus conquer empires, and an Alexander sack the world, he finds thee not; and thou hast once fallen gently, of thy own accord, on the eyelids, on the heart of every mother's child. For, as yet, sleep and waking are one: the fair Life-garden rustles infinite around, and everywhere is dewy fragrance, and the budding of Hope; which budding, if in youth, too frostnipt, it grow to flowers, will in manhood yield no fruit, but a prickly, bitter-rinded stone fruit, of which the fewest can find the kernel.'

Carlyle's pathos touches its most sombre mood when he is dwelling upon the common incidents of daily

life as painted on the background of Eternity. In his '*Cromwell*,' he breaks forth in a beautiful meditation while dealing with a commonplace reference in one of the letters of Cromwell:—'Mrs St John came down to breakfast every morning in that summer visit of the year 1638, and Sir William said grave grace, and they spake polite devout things to one another, and they are vanished, they and their things and speeches,—all silent like the echoes of the old nightingales that sang that season, like the blossoms of the old roses. O Death! O Time!'

Severe comment has been made upon Carlyle's attitude towards science. There was this excuse for his contemptuous attitude—science in its early days fell into the hands of Dryasdusts. So absorbed were these men in analysing Nature, that they missed the sense of mystery and beauty which is the essence of all poetry and all religion. In the hands of the Dryasdusts, Nature was converted into a museum in which everything was duly labelled. During the mania for analysis, it was forgotten that there is a great difference between the description and the explanation of phenomena. In *Sartor Resartus* Carlyle rescues science from the grip of the pedant and restores it to the poet. 'Wonder, is the basis of Worship; the reign of wonder is perennial, indestructible in Man; only at certain stages (as the present), it is, for some short season, a reign *in partibus infidelium*.' That progress

of Science, which is to destroy Wonder, and in its stead substitute Mensuration and Numeration, finds small favour with Teufelsdröckh, much as he otherwise venerates these two latter processes.

'Shall your Science,' exclaims he, 'proceed in the small chink-lighted, or even oil-lighted, underground workshop of Logic alone; and man's mind become an Arithmetical Mill, whereof Memory is the Hopper, and mere Tables of Sines and Tangents, Codification, and Treatises of what you call Political Economy, are the Meal? And what is that Science, which the scientific head alone, were it screwed off, and (like the Doctor's in the Arabian Tale) set in a basin to keep it alive, could prosecute without shadow of a heart,—but one other of the mechanical and menial handicrafts, for which the Scientific Head (having a Soul in it) is too noble an organ? I mean that Thought without Reverence is barren, perhaps poisonous; at best, dies like Cookery with the day that called it forth; does not live, like sowing, in successive tilths and wider-spreading harvests, bringing food and plenteous increase to all Time.'

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'The man who cannot wonder, who does not habitually wonder (and worship), were he President of innumerable Royal Societies, and carried the whole *Mécanique Céleste* and *Hegel's Philosophy*, and the epitome of all Laboratories and Observatories with

their results, in his single head,—is but a pair of Spectacles behind which there is no Eye. Let those who have Eyes look through him, then he may be useful.'

In the sphere of ethics, Carlyle's influence has been inspirational in the highest sense. To a generation which had to choose between the ethics of a conventional theology and the ethics of a cold, prosaic utilitarianism, Carlyle's treatment of the whole subject of duty came as a revelation. If in the sphere of social relationships he did not contribute to the settlement of the theoretic side of complex problems, he did what was equally important — he roused earnest minds to a sense of the urgency and magnitude of the problem, awakened the feeling of individual responsibility, and quickened the sense of social duty which had grown weak during the reign of *laissez faire*. If Carlyle had no final message for mankind, if he brought no gospel of glad tidings, he nevertheless did a work which was as important as it was pressing. In the form of a modern John the Baptist, the Chelsea Prophet with not a little of the wilderness atmosphere about him, preached in grimly defiant mood to a pleasure-loving generation the great doctrines which lie at the root of all religions—the doctrines of Repentance, Righteousness, and Retribution.

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